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THE  
ROADMAKER  
SERIES

*Sir EDWIN CHADWICK*

(1800-1890)

By  
MAURICE MARSTON



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*" Those who carry on great public schemes must be proof against the most fatiguing delays, the most mortifying disappointments, the most shocking insults, and, what is worst of all, the presumptuous judgments of the ignorant upon their designs."—EDMUND BURKE.*





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

TO write a complete, detailed biography of Sir Edwin Chadwick would necessitate at least three years' careful research. He lived for ninety years, and his writings, speeches and manuscripts are all to be found, in the British Museum and elsewhere, hidden away in innumerable files.

In this short study no attempt has been made to make his life's story complete. I have merely taken what I consider to be his most prominent achievements and shown to the best of my ability in what way and in what directions he may be considered a pioneer.

No writer on Chadwick can refrain from expressing his gratitude to Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson for his book *The Health*

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*of Nations*, which, besides giving an interesting biographical dissertation on Chadwick, contains extracts from many of his most famous reports and is in every way of invaluable assistance.

I also wish to express my thanks to Professors Graham Wallas and H. J. Laski for their valuable help and encouragement, and finally to Mr. Jeffery E. Jeffery for reading the proofs and giving advice without which the book would probably not have been written.

M. M.

LONDON,

*January, 1925.*



## INTRODUCTION

WITH the coming of peace after the Napoleonic Wars, the latent desire for reform in England was intensified. The advent of machinery had transformed the country from an agricultural to an industrial state, and the conditions created by this change were felt to be intolerable. During the war men's minds had been too preoccupied to worry over social conditions. New voices, those of Paine, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and others, that had arisen as a result of the French Revolution, had been ruthlessly suppressed by Pitt as being seditious Jacobinism, but in spite of his oppressive legislation the country was seething with discontent.

The Toryism of the day owed its existence to the prestige of the Crown and the aristocracy, and to the cruel legal machinery for enforcing the laws. Hitherto the landed interests had governed the country, and a

paternal government had watched over the destinies of the nation. But it was out of touch with the new conditions. Jealous of the manufacturing interest, terrified of the new working classes, they hung on to the last remnants of their existence with astonishing endurance. The King (George IV), was personally discredited; all attempts at reform were resisted. The criminal law was barbarously savage. Offenders could be hanged for offences such as forging a bank note, or stealing property valued at five shillings, and more than two hundred crimes were punishable by death. The flogging of women was legal punishment for certain offences. The system of jurisprudence made it almost impossible for poor men to get justice. The prisons were a national disgrace. Instead of acting as a deterrent to wrongdoers they were centres of vice and crime. There were no police, but only a few corrupt watchmen who indulged in such practices as waiting to arrest a known offender until he had committed a crime worth the maximum reward of forty pounds. The underlying principle of our modern police system, the prevention of crime, was unknown in England a hundred years ago.

The application of the Poor Law for the relief of the destitute was in a state of chaos. The existing law, which had not been appreciably altered since the Act of Elizabeth, was totally unsuitable for dealing with the new conditions. Under the "Speenhamland Edict" of 1795 the principle of relief in aid of wages—which relief varied with the price of the loaf—was nothing more than an incentive to moral degradation. It meant that the country was adding to its financial burden a liability which should have been borne by the employers of labour. It meant that the price of labour would be left at the lowest possible level so that the highest possible profit might be made. It was a system which helped the loafer and discouraged the worker.

It was a time when the conditions of the workmen mattered nothing compared with the mad rush for production. New factories were springing up everywhere. To serve the new machines men, women and children were toiling day and night under inhuman conditions in these factories and in the mills. Accommodation had to be provided for the new workers. New houses,



new streets, new towns sprang into existence to house the thousands of workmen pouring up from the South of England to seek employment in the North. Houses were erected with such speed and lack of foresight that they were for the most part scarcely fit to be lived in. Faulty construction and bad drainage were characteristic, and no thought of hygiene or sanitation entered the heads of the builders.

Representation in the House of Commons was in a hopeless and ludicrous tangle. The great new manufacturing towns in the North of England—Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford—were entirely unrepresented, whilst villages such as Dunwich—now almost under the sea—returned two members each. The newly arisen manufacturing classes had no representatives in the House of Commons. The land-owning class was the only one from which representatives of the people were drawn, and these representatives were utterly divorced from the aspirations of the people they were supposed to represent.

Such, briefly, were the conditions in England after the Napoleonic Wars. But the spirit of reform was everywhere. New

ideas, new creeds gradually developed. Apathy was giving place to action; individualism, itself in time to be replaced by collectivism, was beating at the doors of paternal government; a new sense of social welfare was being awakened in the conscience of the people. The attack on the rotten system of jurisprudence was led by Jeremy Bentham, whilst William Cobbett preached to the toiling masses the necessity for the reform of the franchise.

Many honoured names stand out as great reformers in the social history of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is a half-century of swiftly moving events, great social upheavals, and tremendous advances in knowledge, a period when old ideas die hard, and new ones are impatient to take their place. Protection gives way to the beginnings of Free Trade, slavery is abolished, the repeal of the Combination Laws is followed by effective Trade Unionism, Chartism rises out of working-class discontent.

New creeds, new ideas burst forth. Some wither away, some stay but a short time; one at least remains, Democracy.

It is the century in which democracy is

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born. The social reformers made this birth possible. They called the attention of an apathetic public to social evils until that public was forced to listen. They exerted every effort to awaken that social conscience without which democracy cannot be created, and amongst these pioneers, these men and women who forced people to think and feel their responsibility towards the community, was Edwin Chadwick.



## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHICAL

**E**DWIN CHADWICK belongs to that type of men the details of whose life add but little to our knowledge of their character. He *was* his public career.

Edwin Chadwick was born at Longsight, near Manchester, on 24th January, 1800. His paternal grandfather, Andrew Chadwick, lived at Rochdale. Andrew was a friend and admirer of John Wesley. He was a man of resolute determination, strict and stern, a man for whom the pleasant amenities of life had no attractions, for whom duty was the first governing principle. The family carried on business as land-owners and manufacturers in Lancashire. Andrew, who was intensely religious after the austere manner of dissenters, founded the first four Sunday Schools in Lancashire. It is not difficult to imagine in what awe

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and fear his grandson must have held him as he strode along the streets, a tall upright man in blue stockings and silver buckled shoes.

Andrew must have looked on his eldest son James, the father of Edwin, as a punishment sent by the Lord for some unnoticed sin, for James resembled his father as little as his own son Edwin resembled him. Artistic, musical, and a lover of natural history, James taught botany and music to the famous chemist, John Dalton. When Edwin was about twelve years old, James left Manchester and came to London, where he interested himself in politics and became editor of the radical paper *The Statesman*. David Lovell, the previous editor, had been imprisoned for a libel on the Commissioners of the Transport Services. On Lovell's release about 1816, James became editor of the *Western Times*, and later he emigrated to New York, where he once more took up journalism. He had married twice, and died in his eighty-fifth year. His first wife, who died young, was the mother of Edwin. Perhaps it was from his mother that Edwin first learnt the sanitary idea, for one of the few things he could remember

about her was her strictness in seeing that he was properly washed and clean every morning and evening.

Edwin was first educated at the village school in Longsight, but left when his parents took up residence in London. From then until he entered an attorney's office early in his teens, he was privately educated. He had selected the law as his profession, and after gaining knowledge at the attorney's office in the routine of legal work, he entered the Inner Temple as a student.

About this time the rugged determination inherited from his grandfather Andrew began to come to the surface. Edwin had had no real education. The village school and private tutors had taught him very little; but by hard work, constant reading and a rigid fixity of purpose, so characteristic of him in his later life, he attained an all-round knowledge of law which was to be of great service to him later on. Also due to his lack of proper education was his proficiency in another sphere—a sphere in which he excelled over all other men of his time. Research workers are made, not born. The patience, the skill, the dexterity required to find things out only come to

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those who have the strength of character to devote themselves to the task. Chadwick revelled in finding things out. When he did not know he found out—and with such swiftness and thoroughness that it was a source of continual amazement to his friends and annoyance to his enemies.

Whilst working for the Bar he was forced to earn his living, for his grandfather had left him no money or land. He took up journalism, contributing to the *Morning Herald*, the *Westminster Review* and the *London Review*.

It was in 1828, in the *Westminster Review*, that Chadwick's first essay on life assurance was published. A friend of Chadwick's had called his attention to a statement made by a Government actuary before a Parliamentary Committee that although the social conditions of the middle classes had improved their expectation of a lengthened life had not advanced accordingly. Chadwick felt that the conclusions arrived at by the Government actuary were false. He was convinced that environment must affect the length of life and the health of the individual. Therefore, since environment, on the actuary's



own showing, had improved, so should the expectation of a lengthened life be advanced. He went into the statistics of the question, and burrowed deep for facts, with the result that his article in the *Westminster Review* attracted a great deal of attention amongst Radical reformers such as James Mill, J. S. Mill and Grote. These men at once regarded him as an apt pupil. They appreciated the force of his arguments, and were interested in the various calculations he had made to prove his theory.

The writing of the article was the turning point in Chadwick's life. From it developed an association which turned his thoughts away from a private and profitable career as a barrister to the desire to work for the public good. Chadwick gained an introduction to the Mills, and became a frequent visitor to their house. Through them he was introduced to Jeremy Bentham, who had already been impressed by his journalistic activities but particularly by an article on Preventive Police which appeared in the *London Review* in 1829. In this article and in the one on Life Assurance, Chadwick set forth the whole of his social philosophy. Even at this early age he had developed the

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principles which were to be included in all his acts of public administration. To what extent he was influenced by Bentham, and to what extent he arrived at these principles through his own personal thought is difficult to decide. Many details of the New Poor Law (1834) were taken from Bentham's unfinished but amazing *Constitutional Code*, whilst many of the arguments he used in the Poor Law Commission Report had already been advanced by other writers. In any case he became, in mind if not in detail, a true follower of Bentham. Nevertheless he refused an independency from him to expound the Benthamite theory after the death of its founder.

In 1830 Chadwick became literary secretary to Bentham, who at that time was engaged in writing his *Constitutional Code*. In this work Bentham was helped by Doctor Southwood Smith as well as by Chadwick, who lived in the house for the last year of Bentham's life.

But although now on terms of personal acquaintanceship with all the disciples of Bentham—men like Mill and his son, Francis Place, Wakefield, Grote and Southwood Smith—Chadwick had not yet decided

what course to pursue. He had been called to the Bar and became a barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple on 26th November, 1830. With his knowledge of law, with his infinite capacity for taking pains over details, and his skill in marshalling his facts, it is certain that had he decided to remain at the Bar, he would have reached a high place in that profession and received a remuneration far in excess of that which he did actually obtain for his services on the various commissions to which he was appointed.

Chadwick was obsessed with what he called his "Sanitary Idea." In his ardent desire to study facts for himself he had visited the slum areas in the East End of London and thereby fell a victim to fever. What effect did this have upon his decision to leave the Bar and accept service on a Government Commission? It is difficult to say. It probably swayed him a good deal. He saw for himself the ghastly conditions under which the labouring classes lived. He must have gained a knowledge of the inefficiency of the local authorities and of the vicious system of Dogberries. With his self-acquired knowledge, with the facts as he had seen them in his visit to the East

End, and with what Bentham had taught him, he worked out the details of his Sanitary Idea.

Chadwick was like the inquiring child at the Zoological Gardens who asked his mother why the giraffe had a long neck. Chadwick asked " Why? " to everything : and moreover, like the child, he was exceedingly impatient if a direct and exhaustive answer was not immediately forthcoming.

Why do men steal? Why is immorality prevalent? Why do we suffer cholera epidemics? Why do we breed crippled, deformed and uneducated children? Why do we lead insanitary lives? These were the questions he asked his generation, and because he received no immediate and satisfactory answer he gave up his practice at the Bar and devoted his life to forcing an apathetic public to take an interest in its own social welfare.

At the instance of Nassau W. Senior, the eminent political economist, Chadwick was appointed an Assistant Commissioner for the districts of London and Berkshire on Lord Grey's Poor Law Commission of 1832. With the acceptance of this post, Chadwick definitely gave up the idea of



continuing his legal practice. His Sanitary Idea had conquered. From henceforth he was to devote himself to the cause of hygiene. In 1833 his obvious capabilities, his energy and his knowledge determined the Commissioners to elect him as one of themselves.

In 1833 his work on this Commission had been temporarily interrupted by his appointment to the Factory Commission, which had been set up in April of that year. The report was issued in July, and shortly afterwards an Act which was largely inspired by Chadwick became law.

Chadwick then returned to the Poor Law Commission, whose recommendations resulted in the Poor Law Amendment Act of August, 1834. Under the Act a central authority—the Poor Law Board—was created, and to this Board Chadwick was appointed as paid secretary.

Four years later, as an immediate result of an outbreak of disease in Whitechapel, Chadwick started his Public Health agitation. In the meantime he had given constant study and thought to all the attendant evils of bad housing and bad sanitation.

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In 1834 he gave evidence before a House of Commons Committee on Drunkenness.

In the early essays on Life Assurance, Chadwick had put forward a plea for the appointment of a Registrar General who should be responsible for the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages throughout the United Kingdom. He now saw a favourable opportunity for the introduction of such a scheme, and succeeded in persuading Lord Lyndhurst to introduce a Bill in the House of Lords giving effect to this idea. This Bill became law in 1836.

In 1838 Chadwick was appointed to a Commission to consider the establishment of an efficient constabulary force in the counties of England and Wales. The report was issued in March, 1839, and contained all Chadwick's principles of preventive action.

Between 1839 and 1842 Chadwick was working on his inquiry into the sanitary conditions of the labouring population as well as being a thoroughly efficient Secretary to the Poor Law Board. As a supplementary to this he made a personal investigation on interments in towns, and wrote a

detailed report. This brought him into real contact with the poorer people. In the course of his investigations he came into touch with ministers of religion, with undertakers, and with secretaries of burial and benefit clubs. The report is a most interesting and brilliant document and contains the germs of many later reforms in intramural interment and general arrangements for the burial of the dead.

In January, 1840, Chadwick presented a further report. This time he made researches into the question of educating the Poor Law children. He probed deeply into the matter, considering it both from the point of view of the agricultural labourer and from that of the factory labourer. He even managed to include recommendations for the education of the men in the Fighting Services. He made exhaustive inquiries into the general educational conditions existing in other countries. From his labours and initiative, a system of education for the very poorest and neglected sprang into existence and, after undergoing severe tests, was adopted as the basic principle for the education of the poor.

In 1842 Sir Robert Peel appointed a

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Royal Commission to inquire into the sanitary condition of Great Britain. This Commission, known as the Duke of Buccleuch's Commission, put itself entirely in Chadwick's hands, and he was largely responsible for its first report, which appeared in 1844.

In 1845 the Poor Law Board came to an end, and Chadwick was free to devote the rest of his life to the cause of sanitation. As a result of the agitation led by him the Public Health Act of 1848 was passed, and a central authority, to which he was appointed as a Commissioner, was set up.

For the next six years, until the breaking up of the Board, Chadwick and his fellow Commissioners were occupied in administering the Act. The energy with which they attacked their problem was such that a powerful agitation was started against them. This agitation was so successful that it led in 1854 to the breaking up of the Board, which eventually was merged into the Local Government Board in association with the Poor Law Board. Thus Chadwick's official career came abruptly to an end.

Before living with Jeremy Bentham at



Queen's Gate, Westminster, Chadwick had occupied rooms in Lyons Inn, Wick Street. After the death of Bentham in 1832 he lived in Orme Square until in 1839 he married Rachel Dawson Kennedy, fifth daughter of John Kennedy of Manchester. Then he settled down at Stanhope Street, Hyde Park Gardens. On his retirement from the Public Health Board he moved to Park Lodge, East Sheen, Surrey.

Although divorced from active administration at the early age of fifty-four, Chadwick continued to show a lively interest in efficient government and sanitation. In 1848 he was given the Order of Commander of the Bath on the recommendation of the Prince Consort, but it was not until 1889 that he was knighted for his services, and became a K.C.B.

Chadwick fulfilled many other public duties after his retirement. Among his more important posts were President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Economic Section) in 1861, President of Social Science Association (Public Health Section) in 1878; and in the same year President of the newly

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formed Sanitary Institute. He was also an honorary member of the *Société d'Hygiène* of France, for which he wrote several papers.

He died at East Sheen on 5th July, 1890.

Such in brief outline is the career of a dominating personality whose strong will, knowledge and forceful character are impressed on every page of the Sanitary and Poor Law legislation of the nineteenth century. That he was a reformer, a Roadmaker, whose influence is felt now, and whose insistence on public welfare was enormously beneficial to the country, will, it is hoped, be shown in the succeeding chapters. But before any adequate comprehension of his life's work can be attained it is essential that a little space be devoted to what is generally known as Individualism, and its founder, Jeremy Bentham. For all the underlying principles of Chadwick's career, or at any rate of his early career, are derived from this ideal, though it is true that later on he connected Individualism with Collectivism, and was in fact one of the earliest builders of the bridge

of association between the two. During his long life he witnessed the evolution from Individualism through *Laissez Faire*, and Collectivism to the beginnings of Socialism.

## CHAPTER II

### BENTHAMITE RADICALISM

**J**EREMY BENTHAM was born in 1748 and died in 1832, the year of the first Reform Bill. During the eighty-four years of his life Bentham worked with one object before him—to make the law easy, intelligible and pure. He was primarily a law reformer, and by continual reiteration of the principles on which the law should be based, he founded the famous school of English Utilitarians, whose social philosophy had a profound effect on nineteenth century legislation. His genius and his enormous capacity for work also had a great effect upon his contemporaries. “The age of law reform,” says Lord Brougham, “and the age of Jeremy Bentham are one and the same. He is the father of the most important of all branches of reform, the leading and ruling depart-



ment of human improvement. No one before him had ever seriously thought of exposing the defects in our English system of jurisprudence."<sup>1</sup> This quotation very adequately describes Bentham's life work. He was the pioneer of the idea of humanizing the law by making general happiness its avowed object.

The latter part of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth had been conspicuous for repressive legislation due to fear of revolution and Jacobinism. Fear had been the governing passion in the repressive measures adopted by the Paternal Government of the Tories, and it was against this attitude of repression that Bentham fought. Hitherto, as Dicey says, the law had been "haphazard as the result of customs or modes of thought which had prevailed at different periods,"<sup>2</sup> and Bentham perceived that what had served the country well through the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Commonwealth, the Restoration and the Napoleonic Wars, was becoming a curse and an impediment to development under the new conditions created

<sup>1</sup> Brougham's *Speeches*, II, quoted in Dicey's *Law and Opinion in England*.

<sup>2</sup> *Law and Opinion in England*.

by the introduction of machinery. He perceived that the legal machine had broken down, and in its place he wished to build up a new system of jurisprudence less hampering to modern conditions. "I do not know," said Sir Henry Maine in his *Early History of Institutions*, "a single law reform effected since Bentham's day which cannot be traced to his influence."

What then were the fundamental principles underlying the spirit of Bentham's theory of individualism?

With a band of devoted disciples, he founded a school of thought in opposition to the teachings of the Tory system of Paternal Government. "In 1808 he [Bentham] had become acquainted with James Mill, and through Mill with Francis Place. . . . Mill and Place became his devoted disciples and brought their revered and beloved master for the first time into practical English politics. They convinced him that the Greatest Happiness Principle was meaningless unless it led to universal suffrage. Bentham became the intellectual leader of the famous Westminster group of Radical politicians. He was soon surrounded by men a generation or two generations younger than him-

self, Mill and his son, Place, Wakefield, Grote, Southwood Smith, Chadwick and others. Under the stimulus of these new followers, with their varied experience, and their hopes for a new world after a long war, he carried on his work as political inventor and adviser more continuously and effectively than ever before. He drafted a complete scheme of Parliamentary democracy. He poured out details of elementary, secondary and technical public education. He performed miracles of industry in preparing a codification of all law."<sup>1</sup>

His philosophy may be summed up in his own famous phrase adopted from Joseph Priestley, that all legislation should attempt to attain "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." The Benthamite doctrine held that legislation should be directed to increase the happiness and prosperity of the individual, and that only by that means could the State, which is comprised of individuals, be in a healthy and prosperous condition. Benthamism taught that the individual should be freed from petty

<sup>1</sup> *Jeremy Bentham*, by Graham Wallas, Academy of Political Science, N.Y.

restrictions and cruel laws. He should be encouraged to accept freedom, responsibility, free competition and free contract. This implies the full, unrestricted development of each individual, a most important advance on the mediæval idea of a distinct and permanent status for each person. Too much government had brought manufacturers and wage earners alike to a state of confusion, and there was a natural reaction to *laissez faire*. Let things alone, leave the individuals comprising society to fight things out, so that each in striving for his own happiness will create happiness for all, and thus will be obtained "the greatest happiness of the greatest number"—such was the creed.

This, then, was Bentham's work. He sought to overthrow Paternal Government; he wished his theory to be applied to the wage earners and artisans as well as to the landed aristocracy and the manufacturers; he wanted Parliament to be omnipotent, to be a real power governing in the interests of all classes, and not in those of a small proportion of the population; he was anxious to abolish patronage and replace it by competitive examination; and, finally, he worked



to establish the Government as a real and effective instrument for the betterment of the whole community.

But Bentham saw clearly that governmental interference would be necessary in order to regulate the system under which the individual lived. In his *Constitutional Code* Bentham details with great minuteness the duties and spheres of activity of each official of an ideal administration. He includes schedules for the Prime Minister and also for the local parish authorities; for the Home Secretary and for the local health authority; for the Lord Chief Justice and for the local magistrate. It is from this that Chadwick took the details for his Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, and for his agitation for the establishment of a Registrar-General for Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Bentham understood the social relationship between individuals. He saw clearly the possibility that an individual would come to stress his individuality to the detriment of other individuals. Therefore he proposed to introduce a system whereby their activities might be regulated, achieving by this means "the greatest happiness

of the greatest number " even though at the cost of some interference with the freedom of the individual.

This, then, is the spirit of reform which Bentham breathed into early nineteenth century legislation. In 1861 Sir Henry Maine wrote in his *Ancient Law*: "It is impossible to overrate the importance to a nation or profession of having a distinct object to aim at in the pursuit of improvement. The secret of Bentham's immense influence in England during the past thirty years is his success in placing such an object before the country. He gave us a clear rule of reform. . . . Bentham made the good of the community take precedence of every other object and thus gave escape to a current which had long been trying to find its way outwards."

Bentham did in fact create a creed. He also collected around him a band of admirers and followers, who, if they did not exceed him in genius, did at any rate perpetuate his principles.

In becoming Bentham's secretary in 1830 and in helping him with his *Constitutional Code* Chadwick learnt the Benthamite theory direct from its founder. With his quick

grasp of detail and with the experience already gained by his work at the Bar he became one of the foremost propagandists of the utilitarian theory. Chadwick had been well schooled for the work he was to perform. No man had a clearer idea of what he wanted to achieve, and it is with this clear cut policy in view that he accepted his first appointment on Lord Grey's Poor Law Commission of 1832.

At the age of thirty-two Chadwick left the Bar, and from that time until his retirement he was to fight continuously for what he believed to be the betterment of the people. Sarcasm and ridicule were to be hurled at his competence; mockery flung at his energy. He was to endure the hatred of the working classes and of the propertied classes. Malicious propaganda was to be stirred up against him. His enemies were strong and in the end they defeated him, the man. But now that we are in a position carefully to examine his work and his ideas it is possible to estimate how much gratitude the country owes to the man who left a profitable career at the Bar for an unremunerative position as administrator of reforms for the public welfare.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NEW POOR LAW

**B**EFORE analysing the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners it will be as well to examine in some detail the Poor Law administration prior to 1832, since the latter, coupled with the corruption and inefficiency in local government, must be held responsible for the then existing chaos.

In 1883 local government was described as a "chaos of areas, a chaos of authorities, and a chaos of rates," and the same might be said of the system prevailing in 1832. With the rapid development of machinery and commerce there was created a need for the extension of local administration in such matters as public lighting, roads and sewers. This need was met by the indiscriminate appointment of *ad hoc* bodies to administer the various services. The result



was that there existed innumerable Boards and Commissions each having separate offices and rating powers. Their boundaries overlapped and interlaced; there was no attempt at co-ordination; and no regular audits were kept. They neither possessed nor deserved to possess the confidence of the nation as "useful and efficient instruments of local government."

The examination of the Poor Law administration may conveniently be started with the Act of 1601 for the Relief of the Poor. The necessity for this Act came about mainly through the conditions arising out of the dissolution of the monasteries. Prior to the Reformation the poor, sick and aged had generally been looked after by the monks. When the religious houses were broken up the poor were deprived of the main bulwark standing between them and starvation and disease. At one blow Henry VIII had removed from the Church the responsibility for the poor, and Elizabeth was forced by her father's action and by the obvious increase in distress among her subjects to pass into law an Act for the Relief of the Poor, the first genuine Poor Law.

The administration of this Act was in the hands of the Justices of the Peace, who were responsible to the Privy Council. The local parish was the administrative unit. The Act arranged "for the setting to work of the children of all such whose parents shall not . . . be thought able to keep and maintain their children; and also for setting to work all such persons married or unmarried having no means to maintain them." The parish was to be taxed to buy stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread and iron to provide work for the poor; money was to be raised to relieve the lame, impotent, old and blind; the parish was to find work for the children by apprenticing them to the various trades operating within the parish; and finally the parish, through its appointed churchwardens and overseers, was to be responsible for the various sums received and expended, and for the true and proper assessment of the stock in their hands, on which the poor were working.

It will be seen that in its origin this was a preventive Act. Its success depended on effective administration by the Justices of the Peace and the Privy Council. A

national system of relief was created to replace the previous purely benevolent efforts of local bodies. The Act definitely stated that the able-bodied unemployed should be provided with work, but it dealt primarily with trades and did not touch the agricultural labourer. But it was precisely the unemployed agricultural labourer who created the problem at the opening of the nineteenth century.

Until after the struggle between Parliament and the King had been settled little was effected, but in the reign of Charles II the Settlement Law (1662) was passed forbidding poor people "to settle themselves in those parishes where there is best stock," and gave power to the Justices of the Peace to convey these would-be settlers back to their native parishes. This Act also set up workhouses in London.

In 1704 Defoe published his pamphlet *Giving Alms No Charity*, in which he laid down several maxims regarding the poor in England, the most important of which was, "that it is a regulation of the poor that is wanted in England, not a setting them to work." He accused the poor of idleness. He accused them of working until their

pockets were full and then wasting the money in drink and slothfulness. By "regulation" Defoe meant that the poor must pass a standard test as to their poorness, and only when they proved to the satisfaction of the guardians that they really were incapable of work would relief be given them.

It took eighteen years before this more drastic treatment was applied under the Workhouse Test Act of 1722. Under this Act the poor were to be looked after and cared for only in the workhouses and any who "shall refuse to be lodged, kept or maintained in such house or houses . . . shall not be entitled to ask or receive collection or relief from the churchwardens and overseers." This Act was intended to prevent idleness, for it was thought that the poor would prefer to try to obtain work in preference to being maintained in the workhouse of the parish. Moreover, seeing that the new workhouses had been built, it was obviously more economical for the overseers to have them filled rather than to provide relief at the pauper's house.

During the time between the passing of this Act and the Poor Law Amendment



Act, devised by Chadwick, the Industrial Revolution had altered the conditions of the problem. There had been an enormous increase in the population; Enclosure Acts had done away with the poor man's right to graze his cattle on common land; the new inventions had caused a redistribution of the population; and owing to the continual wars with France no attempt at reform had been made.

During this period an Act of Parliament and an administrative decision had enhanced rather than lessened the chaotic state of the Poor Law Administration. Gilbert's Act of 1782 states in the preamble that notwithstanding the many Acts for the relief of the poor now on the statute book distress is still grievous and incapacity and misconduct of overseers is prevalent. There follows the provision "that no person shall be sent to such poor house or houses [workhouses], except such as are become indigent by old age, sickness or infirmities, and all unable to acquire a maintenance by their labour." This excludes the able-bodied man, who is to have work found for him near his place of residence. This Act was followed in 1795 by the adoption of the so-called Speen-

hamland "Act of Parliament" which authorized relief in aid of wages. This course was first decided on at a meeting of the local Justices of the Peace at the Pelican Inn, Speenhamland. This was in May, 1795. In December of the same year Pitt passed an Act which upheld the decision of the Justices in Berkshire and entirely reversed the policy of 1722, since relief might now be given in the poor person's home.

This policy, although it gave the labourer a wage based on the price of the loaf, was demoralizing. It left wages at a low level and was therefore a benefit to the employer. It resulted in the labourer not receiving an economic wage and being forced to rely on outdoor relief. The labourer was given no incentive to work because he was sure of a living from the rates. Further, there was the system of "roundsmen." These were able-bodied paupers hired to farmers and employers of labour who, in return for employing the pauper, were relieved of a certain portion of their rates. The Justices fixed the amount of the wages to be paid according to the price of the loaf and the ratepayers made up the difference between

this scale and the amount paid in wages by the employer. Thus free labour competed with pauper; in fact in many places it paid a free man better to become a pauper for he was then certain of a wage. Moreover if he was married he received extra allowance in respect of each child legitimate or illegitimate.

From the events which followed the Speenhamland period rose the necessity for the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

The constitution of the Board of Inquiry into the administration of the Poor Law was almost the last act of the unreformed Parliament. The instructions given by the Commissioners to their Assistant Commissioners were comprehensive and detailed, and may be divided into four parts.

Firstly they were to investigate the method by which relief was administered; secondly they were to report to whom such relief was given; thirdly they were to investigate by whom such relief was given; and fourthly they were to examine at whose expense such relief was given.

The Commissioners were faced with a grave problem. They had to deal with the

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agricultural labourers, who thought that wages were a matter of right and not of contract. They had to deal with those employers who wanted the scandalous system to continue; and finally they had to contend with those people who hated central authority and efficiency and who desired things to go on as they were so long as they personally were allowed to pursue their own pleasures.

The Commissioners appointed in 1832 included among others the Bishop of London (Doctor Blomfield), W. Sturges Bourne and Nassau W. Senior. Chadwick, who in his capacity of Assistant Commissioner had been making exhaustive inquiries in Windsor and Reading, was invited in 1833 to become a Commissioner. His new position at once gave him a wider scope. He was now able not only to investigate but to advise, direct and instruct. His dominating personality persuaded his fellow Commissioners to discuss and consider matters which but for his insistence would never have been considered at all.

The report, which was presented on 20th February, 1834, is an interesting document of great historical importance.



It recommended the abolition of any form of outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers and their families. It created a Central Board of Commissioners, who were to control the whole Poor Law machinery with such Assistant Commissioners as might be necessary. It gave power to the Commissioners to make rules and regulations binding on all the existing authorities. To simplify workhouse management parishes were to be united and a uniform system of accounts was to be established.

It will be seen that these recommendations were of a revolutionary character in the history of the Relief of the Poor. It was at once a reversal of Gilbert's Act and the Act of 1795, and reverted back to the main theory of the Elizabethan Law. By saying to the worker: "Either you are a pauper, in which case come into the workhouse and we will give you relief, or you are not, in which case stay outside," it did away with the subsidy in aid of wages and forced the able-bodied pauper to respect himself and look for work in the knowledge that if he did not the workhouse awaited him.

By creating a Central Board the Commissioners were initiating a new departure

in Local Government administration the effects of which were to be felt later on in many other Government departments. In doing this they were actuated by the belief that efficiency and good administration were only to be obtained by central control. They felt that it would be impossible to administer the new Act unless there was uniformity throughout the administration: and uniformity implied control. "Under the old system," says Mark Hovell, "each parish had been an independent corporation, administering relief and levying rates with scarcely a shadow of control from the Central Government."<sup>1</sup> Under the recommendations of the Commissioners the piece-meal system of management by over fifteen thousand local sovereignties was abolished and the whole administration was to be placed under the control of a specially constituted Board responsible to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

The report which was presented by the Commissioners was largely the work of Senior and Chadwick. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 introduced in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Chartist Movement*, Mark Hovell.

House of Commons by Lord Althorp was based on the report of the Commissioners and became law in August. It deviated in many ways from the original proposals of Chadwick. He held strongly that the destitute should be divided into distinct classes. He would have built industrial schools for the children of the workless; the aged he would have housed in almshouses; the insane he would have housed in proper asylums under scientific medical care; the sick he would have placed in hospitals. But he was before his time. These humane improvements were left out of the Act and the "rigorous and scientific administration of the Poor Law (1834) under the control of the central government . . . favoured by Benthamites"<sup>1</sup> was put into practice. Bentham's late pupil was appointed the paid secretary of the first Poor Law Board.

The Act was passed into law amidst the acclamations of two widely different personalities. Lord John Russell spoke of it as a "measure that saved the country from great social evils, if not absolutely from social revolution";<sup>2</sup> while the Duke of

<sup>1</sup> *Law and Opinion in England*, Dicey.

<sup>2</sup> *The Health of Nations*, Vol. I, B. W. Richardson, quoted.

Wellington, whose habit of opposing all innovating Acts was a byeword, thought "that the measure was the only plan he had ever seen that he approved of, and . . . he gave it his cordial support."<sup>1</sup> Later Gladstone spoke of the Act as being perhaps "the greatest reform of this [the nineteenth] century."<sup>2</sup>

But many harsh words were said in opposition to the measure. It was considered to be cruel and oppressive. The labouring classes disliked it because they were suspicious of the new workhouses; the manufacturers because they feared that it would be the start of an agitation for an increase in wages—which indeed it was; the philanthropic Tories like Sadler and Oastler because they hated utilitarianism and because they believed that the Act merely further increased the hardships of the poor. The landowners and the Church were stupefied. They were aghast at the idea of the labouring man doing anything for himself. They were still steeped in the theories of Paternal Government. They were horrified that a central body in London

<sup>1</sup> *The Health of Nations*, Vol. I, B. W. Richardson, quoted.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



should be given power to control and look after the welfare of the poor they had so mismanaged for years. Here was an Act passed into law which urged the labourer to use his own individualism, his own initiative; for if he was unable to find work he was forced to become a pauper. No wonder they hurled abuse at Chadwick and his radicalism; but they were to receive many similar shocks before he was hounded from public life.

For the next thirteen years Chadwick remained as the Board's secretary. During this time he strove to make the Act a success. With indefatigable energy he worked for the Act for which he was so largely responsible. He met with great difficulties. He was forced to fight strong opponents whose interests were seriously affected, men who were exploiting the pauper and public alike for the benefit of their own pockets. Not only did he meet with obstacles outside the Commission, but he found the Commissioners themselves apathetic and uninterested. The only exception was Sir George Nicholls, who for the greater part of the time, however,

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was occupied with the administration of the Poor Law in Ireland. Finally there was the difficulty of Chadwick's own character. He did not suffer fools gladly. He had a will of iron and an objective to reach. No matter what obstacles were in his path he brushed them aside, and the manner in which he did this was far from tactful. He made enemies unnecessarily because he would waste no time in trying to convert people to his own opinion. They either agreed with him or they did not. If they did not they were wrong and must be pushed aside to make way for him who was right. That was his method. Such a driving, forceful, pushing man, who was right and knew he was right, was a startling innovation in nineteenth century administrative method.

The Board issued its first report in August, 1835. In this report the Commissioners stated that over one hundred new unions, comprising two thousand parishes, had been formed. These figures show with what zeal the Commissioners had got down to work. Chadwick had always believed in the principle of aggregating in order to segregate. By collecting and unify-

ing the various parishes and then re-forming them in Unions he had gone far to get rid of overlapping in Local Administration. It is true that he wished to see the administration of the Unions in the hands of paid officials, "acting under the consciousness of constant superintendence and strict responsibility." This he could not do: but to have changed in one year the system under which there was no responsibility to anyone to one under which there was a semblance of administrative efficiency was an act of perseverance for which Chadwick alone of the Commissioners was responsible.

In circulating the details of his Act and in attempting to make it more widely known and understood by the people, Chadwick was greatly helped by Francis Place, with whom he had been in constant touch since his first appointment as an Assistant Commissioner. In fact the Chartist paper *Northern Liberator* writes of Place that he was "the very head and chief, the life and soul of the Poor Law Board."<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps an exaggeration, but Place, who

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Life of Francis Place*, Graham Wallas.

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was a born publicity agent, and who would even to-day be of real service to the Trade Union Movement, had exactly those qualities which Chadwick lacked. He had influence with the workers' movement, then just beginning, and he had a happy method of advertisement which always reached its intended readers.

One of the great objections to the New Act was that it forbade married couples to live together in the workhouse unless these were of an age when children were unlikely to be born. This harsh rule, though possibly necessary at that time, was not contained in Chadwick's report, but was inserted in the Bill to prevent the workhouses from being filled with pauperized children.

The rule of the three Commissioners was vastly unpopular on this account. The workhouses, or the Bastilles as they were popularly called, for which the Commissioners were held responsible, were considered with distrust and hatred by the people. Cobbett, arguing that poor relief out of the rates was not an ill advised charity but a legal right, fiercely attacked the Malthusian school. "How can Malthus



and his nasty and silly disciples," he writes in the *Poor Man's Friend*, "how can those who want to abolish the Poor Rates, to prevent the poor from marrying; how can this at once stupid and conceited tribe look the labouring man in the face, while they call on him to take up arms, to risk his life in defence of the land?" John Fielden successfully prevented the Act from being introduced into his own district of Todmorden, whilst J. R. Stephens made violent speeches in opposition to the Act. "If Lord John Russell wanted to know what he [Stephens] thought of the New Poor Law, he would tell him plainly he thought it was the law of devils . . . if vengeance was to come, let it come; it would be an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, limb for limb, wife for wife, child for child, and blood for blood."<sup>1</sup> Finally Carlyle, writing in 1839, said: "*Laissez faire, laissez passer!* Whatever goes on, ought it not to go on. . . . Such at bottom seems to be the chief social principle, if principle it have, which the Poor Law Amendment Act has the merit of courageously asserting, in opposition to many things. A chief social

<sup>1</sup> *The Chartist Movement*, Mark Hovell.

principle which this present writer, for one, will by no manner of means believe in, but pronounce at all times to be false, heretical, and damnable, if ever aught was." Even the sixpenny *Times*, the organ of the governing classes, was caustic in its views. "The pinch-pauper triumvirate,"<sup>1</sup> "worse than Egyptian Bondage"<sup>2</sup> were two of the expressions it used against the Commissioners and their Act, whilst on hearing that someone had had the audacity to circularize the House of Commons with a pamphlet in praise of the Acts its indignation knew no bounds. "Sucking Solon of the Benthamite breed"<sup>3</sup> it politely called him. The "sucking Solon" was probably Chadwick inspired by Place. Nor was the hostility to Chadwick confined to the public. The Commissioners whose secretary he was cordially disliked him, and relations were very strained. This is quite intelligible, for these men were neither social reformers nor radicals. They were not really interested in the Act they were administering. Tradition and custom were their parents and yet they found them-

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Poor Law*, Mackay.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

selves egged on to administer the first Act of Benthamite radicalism introduced in this country. An ironical position indeed, but a position made worse by the fact that their secretary was one of the chief authors of the Act, a man who realized all its implications and was determined to make it work.

Chadwick understood the position of the Commissioners. He saw clearly that they did not appreciate the urgent necessity for curbing the demoralizing effect of subsidizing wages out of the rates. "These faults," he tells us, "were slow to die out; they had been the implants of centuries, and to men born and bred in country life were so familiar that the value of the new principle was not recognized. From these men the idea of supplying Labour from the workhouse to persons who had lands and buildings outside the workhouse could never be fully eradicated."

It is not difficult to imagine the disgust with which these Commissioners must have met Chadwick's exuberant energy, sincerity and horror of inefficiency. How they must have hated this man who worked so abominably hard and was so keen, this

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worker among drones! "If only he would leave us alone," we can imagine them saying. "What does it matter about the precise procedure of an unruly Union. We have a comfortable position here. It is true that we are not immune from attack in Parliament, but so long as we publish figures to satisfy people that we are reducing the rates, what does it matter if we do not interpret the Act exactly as it was passed." But they reckoned without their secretary.

The Act had been passed with (to Chadwick) many grievous alterations and deviations from the report. No sooner was the Board established than he made efforts by administrative orders to incorporate these various omissions. To a large extent he was successful, the better education of the pauper children being one of the results of these activities.

Matters got worse when new appointments were made. In 1839 and 1841 respectively two of the original Commissioners resigned and two more were appointed. This made Chadwick's position almost intolerable, for these two new members relegated him to the position of



a clerk, a mere recorder of the Commissioners' meetings, resolutions and discussions. Unable to do anything actively Chadwick let the Commissioners have their own way. When they were wrong at law he told them so, in a not too tactful way. Moreover he constantly obtained the support of Lord John Russell against his Commissioners, but was careful to carry out his own duties of secretary methodically and punctiliously so that they could have no possible complaint against him on the grounds of inefficiency.

The Commissioners had undoubtedly some ground for complaint. Chadwick was certainly lacking in tact in approaching Lord John Russell in this way. But his defence was a simple one. He would have argued that in his opinion unless and until the Act was properly administered, agitation against it would not cease. The Commissioners were preventing this; therefore it was his duty to report them. The Act was his Bible. When other men would have resigned from an intolerable position, he clung to his post in the hope that the Commissioners would mend their ways.

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A man who is usually right is a disagreeable friend. Such men will commit any act, however uncalled for, to prove themselves right. Behind their sincerity and earnestness there lurks a delight in pointing out the mistakes of others. Chadwick had this fault to a degree. Lacking in tact he did not even attempt to prove his arguments, he merely stated what he knew to be right and fiercely attacked those who disagreed with him. If he had resigned his post he would have been deserting his duty. Therefore he made himself unpopular by reiterating his views to men quite unable to grasp either his outlook or his meaning.

For several years these differences continued, until in 1845 there arose what became known as the Andover scandal. If the opponents of the Act had not been strong and numerous, this scandal would never have assumed the proportions it did. It was because Chadwick's enemies thought that by making mischief they would be doing him harm that the details were subject to a House of Commons Committee of Inquiry. Added to this, political feeling

was raised to fever heat by the intensive agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League. The country was excited politically, and any hint of maladministration by the Board was bound to create a deep impression and be used by opponents of the Government as a political arrow.

One of the occupations to which paupers in the Union Workhouses were put was crushing bones. In the case of the Andover Union Workhouse it was alleged that the paupers had, presumably for lack of other food, been found eating the marrow extracted from the bones. Immediately there was an outcry, and the Member for Andover moved a motion in the House of Commons for a Committee of Inquiry. Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, a man whose chameleon-like changes from Tory to Whig Cabinets seriously challenges Mr. Winston Churchill, refused, but on a vote being taken he was found to be in the minority. In the meantime the Board had sent down one of their own Assistant Commissioners to hold an inquiry. This inquiry was an absolute fiasco. The Assistant Commissioner had great difficulty in keeping the inquiry to

the point at issue. He found that some witnesses charged the Master of the work-house with all sorts of crimes and wickednesses; others held forth on the misdemeanours of the Board itself. In fact the inquiry devolved into a round of personal abuse and mud slinging. Although the charges brought against the Master were probably unfounded or at any rate grossly exaggerated, there was undoubtedly some ground for believing that the Act was not being administered as it should be. The Commissioners were undoubtedly shutting their eyes to many illegal procedures and abuses.

The results of the inquiry were that the Master resigned and that the Board, rather ungenerously, forced the Assistant Commissioner to resign also. Sir James Graham and the Board itself were highly dissatisfied with the way the inquiry had been conducted.

At the Parliamentary inquiry which followed, Chadwick gave evidence against his Commissioners. With a vehemence which showed his intense dislike for anything underhand he denounced them, and declared that time and again he had given



the Board proof that the Act was not being properly administered. He stated frankly that these proofs had been ignored and that many illegal practices had been countenanced by the Board.

Disraeli, who had pertinently asked the Commissioners why if their Secretary, "this monster in human shape," had been insubordinate, as they alleged, they had not removed him, then proposed a motion against the Commissioners accusing them of being negligent in their duties. The motion was carried and the Board was doomed.

A graphic description of this Committee was given in a leading article which appeared in *The Daily News* of 19th August, 1846. "Chadwick," says the writer, "stands alone, dark and terrible as Milton's hero, confronting the whole three Commissioners, who are waxing more and more vehement. It is not easy to conceive how the belligerents can be got to meet on terms of truce." Sir George Nicholls in his *A History of the English Poor Law* gives an interesting account of a correspondence which passed between himself, at that time the senior Commissioner,

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the junior Commissioners and Chadwick. In the spring of 1847 Chadwick wrote to Sir George asking him if he would state whether he had found anything unsatisfactory or detrimental to the prestige of the Board in his behaviour as Secretary to the Commissioners. Sir George replied that whilst they had many times differed as to the manner in which the Commission should be conducted, he held him (Chadwick) in high esteem as a secretary, and recognized his valuable work for the community. A copy of Chadwick's original letter together with this reply was then sent to the other two Commissioners, for Sir George was naturally anxious that there should be no question of intrigue between him and Chadwick against his fellow Commissioners. These two Commissioners, who had very much resented Chadwick's outspoken attitude before the Committee of Inquiry, replied that they entirely dissented from the sentiments expressed by Sir George, and that Chadwick's behaviour had been irregular and prejudicial to the public service. To this Sir George replied pointing out what valuable work Chadwick had done in

administering the Act, how he had never spared himself in working for the Commissioners, and finally, after admitting that they had often differed, he says: "Of all men with whom it has been my lot to be brought in contact, I never have met one with higher impulses, or whose efforts appeared to be more singly and earnestly directed to what he believed to be the public good." And then, in commenting on their insistence that Chadwick should be excluded from the Board's consultations and be relegated to the position of secretary, merely attending to the details of routine, Sir George says: "Such an exclusion must have deeply hurt his feelings, and, coupled with the opinion he entertained with respect to the mode of transacting the business of the department, led, I believe, to much of what has recently ensued."

Sir George was perfectly right. Chadwick did feel very deeply that he had been insulted by being relegated to the background, for he was the chief author of the Act, and he hated to see the Commissioners operating it wrongly, badly and without enthusiasm. He had nursed his grievance while awaiting an opportunity to state his

case. At the Andover inquiry his patience was at an end, and he lashed out. Disraeli's question to the Commissioners as to why this "monster" had not been dismissed was left unanswered, but the reason is not difficult to find. If Chadwick had been dismissed he would have been free to denounce them, an opportunity he would not have let pass. As it was, they played on his devotion to duty by keeping him at the Board but ignored his protests on behalf of efficient local government.

In June, 1846, Sir Robert Peel's Government gave way to Lord John Russell's, and in the following May the Poor Law Board Act was introduced and became law. By this Act the Poor Law Commission was abolished, and in its place a new Board constituted, with the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer as ex-officio members. The President, with a casting vote, was to be appointed by the Crown and he, together with a Parliamentary Secretary, represented the Board in Parliament.

"It is to be hoped he [Chadwick] will keep quiet," said the junior Commissioners.



Their hope was vain. For another nine years Chadwick was to be a worry to Governments, a curse to profit-making capitalists, and a source of continual irritation to the more rigid adherents of *laissez faire*. But at the same time it is to be regretted that his determined adhesion to what he considered his duty was the cause of his early retirement from public service.

To sum up the good and bad points of the Act: It may be said, firstly, that it rendered good service by greatly diminishing the system of outdoor relief to able-bodied men. This was perhaps its chief asset, for any system which countenances relief in aid of wages is bound to be demoralizing both to the giver and receiver of the relief. Secondly, in appointing a central authority to control the local authorities, an effort was made to eliminate the various local customs and to regulate the system on a sound administrative basis. Thirdly, by creating the Union as the unit of administration in place of the parish a great deal of unnecessary overlapping was done away with. Fourthly, Chadwick's idea of the

salaries official was introduced and found to be a vast improvement on the compulsory unpaid worker. Fifthly, the Act embodied the principle of "less eligibility," which means that the lot of destitute paupers should be less desirable than that of the employed labouring man: an admirable principle provided that the status of the labourer is economically just and stable.

On all these grounds the Act may be said to have improved greatly on its predecessor, but it failed in many directions. The Central Board were unable to appreciate that the enormous increase in production brought with it many attendant evils. The cyclical trade depression was then, as it is to-day, one of the chief causes of unemployment. Under the Act a man unemployed through no fault of his own was forced to accept relief below the level of his ordinary existence inside a workhouse along with others who could not work and who would not work. There can be no justification for this treatment except that neither the economists of the day nor the Commissioners understood the situation. Cyclical trade depression as a cause of

unemployment is the greatest of all industrial problems, and the Commissioners failed lamentably to grasp its importance.

Taking the Act as a whole it did good. It was bitterly opposed in the North of England, where employment depended so largely on trade. It was here that Oastler and Stevens preached resistance. But in the rural districts it helped the agricultural labourer by stopping the terribly demoralizing effect of relief in aid of wages. The labourer could no longer imagine "that wages are not a matter of contract but of right; that any diminution of their comforts occasioned by an increase of their numbers, without an equal increase of the fund for their subsistence, is an evil to be remedied not by themselves, but by the magistrates; not an error, or even a misfortune, but an injustice."<sup>1</sup>

"The Act of 1834," said Mark Hovell in his book *The Chartist Movement*, "was the first piece of genuine radical legislation which this country has enjoyed; it was the first fruits of Benthamism. For the first

<sup>1</sup> Poor Law Commission Report, 1834.

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time a legislative problem was thoroughly and scientifically tackled."

The Act was largely Chadwick's work. It had its faults, it had its limitations: but the good it did was the result of his tireless labour.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST FACTORY COMMISSION

CHADWICK'S connection with the early factory legislation was brief but important. Whilst still a member of the Poor Law Commission he was appointed in April, 1833, to a Royal Commission "to collect information in the manufacturing districts with respect to the employment of children in factories, and to devise the best means for the curtailment of their labour."

Before the work of this Commission can be discussed, it is necessary to make a short survey of the conditions of labour prevalent before 1833.

The first factories, which had been run by water power, were usually situated near running streams in remote districts in the North of England, and had been worked by pauper children sent up from London and

the South of England. These children were working fourteen hours a day for six days a week. They were being treated worse than slaves. They often began work at six years of age. At thirteen they were deformed for life. They were beaten by the overlookers if they went to sleep at their work. During their fourteen hours labour they were allowed one hour for rest and refreshment, during which time they were expected to clean the machinery. Often they lived considerable distances from their work. This necessitated their getting up and being dressed at three o'clock in the morning, and it would be eleven o'clock before, after having their food, they could be got to bed. They would fall asleep with food in their mouths. They would have to be carried, or helped to the mill, too tired to walk by themselves. Their wages were three shillings a week with seven pence halfpenny overtime when the mill was working long hours, and the owners expected them to lay out part of their wages under the "truck" system. The children were forced to work these overtime hours or else be dismissed from the factory. When they were injured or incapacitated

the wages were stopped at once; indeed if the accident occurred in the early part of the day the wages were stopped at half or quarter day as the case might be.

Very much the same conditions prevailed in the coal mines. Here there were numerous cases of women actually hewing coal, and persons of both sexes whose ages ranged from seven to twenty-one were employed in the pits, filling the tubs with coal. This work was usually performed in almost complete darkness, so that during the winter months many of the children never saw daylight except on Sundays and other pit holidays. The hours of their daily work were never less than eleven and in some districts more. The men worked naked and the women naked to the waist.

These details of child labour are given as examples of what was quite frequently found in the factories. They are an indication of the inhuman depths to which factory employers and coal-owners had sunk.

It was an age of callous indifference. The demand for the newly manufactured goods was so great that the conditions of the labourers employed in making them

mattered nothing. The employers, in their haste to produce the goods, seemed to lose all sense of their responsibility to the men, women and children they employed. Ideas of a moral conscience were buried deep under such sentiments as "it is better surely to work hard than to starve" and "the industry will be ruined if the hours of work are shortened."

Petitions to the House of Commons were of no avail. The House would appoint a Committee to investigate the alleged grievance. The artisans wanted a strict enforcement of the Elizabethan Apprentices Laws limiting the number of apprentices the employer might employ. . . . "But the large employers would produce before that Committee an overwhelming array of evidence proving that without the new machinery their growing export trade must be arrested; that the new process could be learnt in a few months instead of seven years. . . . Confronted with such a case as this for the masters even the most sympathetic Committee seldom found it possible to endorse the proposals of the artisans. The artisans . . . mistook the remedy; and Parliament, though it saw



the mistake, could devise nothing better. Common sense forced them to take the easy and obvious step of abolishing the mediæval regulations which industry had outgrown. But the problem of the workers' Standard of Life under the new conditions was neither easy nor obvious, and it remained unsolved until the nineteenth century discovered the expedients of Collective Bargaining and Factory Legislation."<sup>1</sup>

To alter the demoralizing conditions injurious both to the physical and moral health of the workpeople the first Factory Act was introduced and passed into law by Sir Robert Peel senior in 1802. This Act, however, only applied to apprentices. At the time it was passed through the House of Commons the Apprentice Law of 1563 had not been repealed. (It was repealed in 1814.)

The discovery of steam power created a fresh problem. The factories could now be worked in and near the large towns. The employers employed "free" labour. The hand loom weavers hated the new machinery and at first refused to send their children

<sup>1</sup> S. and B. Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, 1666-1920.

to the towns, but as steam power developed the hand weavers were forced to capitulate. The free labour children went through the same hardships as the apprentices had done before them.

The Act of 1802 "enacted that all and every the rooms and apartments in or belonging to any such mill or factory shall, twice at least a year, be well and sufficiently washed with quick lime and water." In dealing with the hours of labour it "enacted that no apprentice . . . shall be compelled to work more than twelve hours a day. . . . No apprentice shall be . . . compelled to work . . . between the hours of nine of the clock at night and six of the clock in the morning." But the most important clause in the Act was that the Justices of the Peace were to "appoint two persons, not interested in, or in any way connected with, any such mills or factories, to be visitors . . . one of whom shall be a Justice of the Peace and the other shall be a clergyman of the Established Church." Thus for the first time the State interfered with the running of industry in the form of inspectorship, but the principle of Government interference through authorized factory

visitors was evaded and became a dead letter. The Act was nevertheless an important move forward along the road of more humane measures for the workers. It brought down the hours of labour to twelve a day (six in the morning till nine at night), although it excluded the time occupied by the apprentices for meals. Nightwork was abolished, although the apprentices were allowed to sleep two in a bed. Apprentices were to be taught the three R's during some part of every working day, and they were to be instructed in the Christian religion every Sunday, and were to attend divine service once a month. It is curious with what anxiety the Established Church cared for the souls of the apprentices whilst they left their unfortunate bodies to be cared for by the tender mercies of the new *entrepreneur*. Apparently it was more important to teach Christianity to an unfortunate child working seventy-two hours a week than to lift so much as a finger to protest against the conditions which made him bow-legged and deformed before he had reached adolescence.

The Act met with the intense opposition of the factory owners, but when they realized

that it was simple to evade, they merely ignored it.

But what was happening to the factory hands was far more serious. By the Act which abolished the Statute of Apprentices the relation between the employer and employee was revolutionized. The worker was being transformed into a mere cog in the machine of industry—to be bought just as any other part of the machinery was to be bought. The ownership of the means of production was being taken out of his hands. The capitalist was becoming the owner, and the workers “passed into the condition of lifelong wage-earners, possessing neither the instruments of production nor the commodity in its finished state.”<sup>1</sup> As a result of this repeal the great war—the war between the employer and the labourer—which had been in progress for centuries in some form or another, assumed a new form, fanned to new vigour by the new circumstances. The Trade Union idea of securing and maintaining better conditions of labour for the workers was enormously strengthened. A

<sup>1</sup> S. and B. Webb's *The History of Trade Unionism*, 1666-1920.



new era of State intervention in industry was made inevitable. The Right of Combination, Collective Bargaining, Collectivism and a whole new code of observances between the employer and his workman—all these making up the prelude to Democracy—start with the close of the Industrial Revolution.

The first fifty years of the nineteenth century contain all the germs of our modern society. Minute examination of practically all those problems which may essentially be termed home problems will reveal roots deeply buried in this period. This early factory legislation, although it forms only one of the many facets of this half of the century, is of vast importance, for from it springs the whole of the modern system of regulations which functions throughout the factory life of the present day.

In 1815 Sir Robert Peel again introduced a Bill to abolish the employment of children under ten years of age and to limit the hours of work to ten per day. This Act was to apply to all child labour, free and apprenticed. But the Bill met with opposition and a committee was appointed to hear evidence from all sides—excluding, of course, the workers. Eventually the Cotton

Factory Act of 1819 was passed. This Act was stillborn. It prohibited the employment in cotton factories of all children under nine, and limited their working hours to twelve. It contained the usual clause about washing the interiors of the workrooms with quick lime and water twice a year. Of effective inspectorship there was none: the Act was useless in consequence, and conditions were left untouched.

The Reform Bill controversy was the absorbing political topic of the time, but much quiet agitation was going on in the North of England for factory reform. On 29th September, 1830, Richard Oastler, whose impetuous nature and large heart makes him a lovable figure, wrote his famous letter to the *Leeds Mercury* in which he fiercely attacked the indifference of the country towards the question of factory legislation. After a vigorous onslaught on the anti-slavery party for their callousness in regard to the "innocent victims" in the worsted mills as opposed to their grand championship for "negro liberty," Oastler ends with an appeal to the British nation. "Thousands of little children," he writes, "both male

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and female, but *principally female*, from SEVEN to fourteen years, are daily *compelled to labour* from six o'clock in the morning to seven in the evening with only—Britons, blush whilst you read it!—*with only thirty minutes allowed for eating and recreation*. . . . If I have succeeded in calling the attention of your readers to the horrid and abominable system on which the worsted mills in and near Bradford are conducted, I have done some good."

Immediately after the publication of this letter there grew up a strong agitation headed by men not drawn from the ranks of the workers, but Tory philanthropists such as Michael Sadler and Lord Shaftsbury; master spinners such as John Fielden and John Wood; and divines such as J. R. Stevens and G. S. Bull.

In Michael Sadler the movement found a strong, if somewhat hot-headed leader, and he soon introduced in the House of Commons the Bill which led to the Ten Hours Movement. By this Bill Sadler proposed to prohibit all employment of children under nine, and limited the work to ten hours a day for all between the ages of nine and sixteen. The Bill was defeated but it had

the effect of forcing the Government to appoint a committee over which Sadler himself presided. This time workmen gave evidence. The report, which appeared in 1832, disclosed a deplorable state of affairs and proved beyond question that the agitation from the North had a strong, indeed an unanswerable case. In the meantime in the first reformed Parliament Sadler lost his seat, and the leadership of the agitation in the House of Commons fell into the hands of Lord Ashley, afterwards Lord Shaftesbury. Early in 1833 he reintroduced Sadler's Bill with slight alterations and additions. Though not thrown out it was allowed to lapse, and a Government Commission was appointed, the terms of which have already been given. It was to this Commission that Chadwick was appointed, together with Thomas Tooke and Doctor Southwood Smith.

The Commissioners went to work in the same way that the Poor Law Commission had done. They appointed Assistant Commissioners, and themselves sat in London and received reports. So well and with such energy did the Commission proceed with its work that the report was presented



in August, 1833, only six weeks after its appointment.

The leaders of the agitation were furious that Ashley's Bill had been defeated by what they considered to be a mere manœuvre on the part of the Government in appointing a Commission. The Assistant Commissioners had a difficult task to perform in the most trying circumstances, for they had to face the hatred of the employers and the mistrust of the workers.

The report when issued was sane and non-sensational. Like everything handled by Chadwick, it was a masterly exposition of the facts. The Commission looked at the question of employment of child labour from a highly scientific plane. They ignored the emotional appeal of Oastler and Sadler, whose arguments on grounds of pity were invariably answered by the retort already mentioned: "It is better to work twenty-three hours a day than to starve." Chadwick's scheme was to approach the problem not so much from the point of view of morality as from that of expediency: whether, that is to say, it was better to work children for such hours as to invite their becoming, through ill-health, inopera-

tive, or to work them fewer hours and keep them at the factories.

The report of the Commissioners, therefore, followed a different line of thought than had hitherto been suggested. They urged that no children under nine years of age should be employed in the factories; that between the ages of nine and thirteen they should not be employed on night work, and that between these ages they should not work more than eight hours a day; that a regular institution of whole time Government inspectorship should be adopted; that children should be sent to school for three hours daily; finally they inserted a clause regarding the liability of employers for accident from faulty construction of factories or from bad machinery.

Meanwhile Ashley's Bill for an all-round ten hours' working day had been going its normal course through the House of Commons. But when the report of the Commissioners was issued, Lord Althorp, as leader of the House, defeated the Bill by substituting the ages and hours suggested by the Commissioners in their report for those suggested by Lord Ashley.

Lord Althorp then introduced his Factory

Bill of 1833 which was based to a large extent on the report issued by the Commissioners. It is true it lacked the foresight, spirit and boldness which Chadwick had put into the report, but it contained the education clause, the hours clause, the age clause and most important of all the inspectorship clauses.

Thus was passed into law the first real Act of State regulation. It had been passed reluctantly by the Government, whose hands had been forced by their own Commission; with bitterness and opposition by the reformers, who wanted the Ten Hours Bill restricting the hours of labour for the adult as well as the child; and with relief by the factory owners who dreaded that Ashley's Bill would be passed into law.

But the three chief protagonists themselves failed to see what really had been done. Chadwick and his fellow Commissioners had not been over merciful to the factory children. Indeed judged on modern standards they were brutal. They had not started a crusade for education. Three hours a day with an eight hour working day for children between the ages of nine

and thirteen would be rightly ridiculed by modern educationalists. But they had done something far more important than this. By instituting a proper and powerful system of Government inspectorship they had driven the first nail into the coffin of *laissez faire*, and instead of mourning its demise they had begun to build the bridge which was to lead to Collectivism. The Bill registered a precedent. "Freedom of contract" had been the cry of the followers of Adam Smith. "The greatest happiness of the greatest number" had been Bentham's slogan. But Chadwick, who defined *laissez faire* as "the term applied in political economy to the relief from obstruction to interchange or to the freedom of transit," saw that this philosophy could be carried to extremes. He saw the necessity for Government interference in the everyday lives of the people: for without this the phrase "relief from obstruction" would be used for the absolute destruction of those whose entire livelihood tended more and more to depend upon the production of wealth over which they had no control.

"The effects," wrote the Commissioners in their report, "of factory labour on



children are both immediate and remote : the immediate effects are fatigue, sleepiness and pain ; the remote effects—such at least as are usually conceived to result from it—are deterioration of the physical constitution, deformity, disease and deficient mental instruction and moral culture.” If then “ relief from obstruction ” in trade and commerce was to lead to “ deterioration,” “ deformity,” “ disease,” Chadwick saw clearly that it was time the State again interfered, not this time to prevent freedom of contract between the producer and consumer at home or abroad but to promote the moral, physical, and mental welfare of the workers employed in producing the nation’s wealth.

The State as Chadwick saw it was not omnipotent, but neither were the factory owners. The Commissioners in their report refrained from casting a slur on the factory owners in particular. “ It is on evidence,” runs their report, “ that boys employed in collieries are subjected at a very early age to a severe labour, that cases of deformity are more common, and accidents more frequent amongst them than amongst children employed in factories.” It was

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rather against a system which took no account of the health, efficiency and happiness of the future generation that Chadwick's anger was aroused. His remedy was scientific improvement of the law by the tightening up of the executive power through a system of Government inspectorship, a remedy which to-day has been applied in all the State-controlled departments of Public Health, Sanitation, Education, Post Office and Prisons.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGITATION

THE reader will understand that in this book Chadwick's work on the Poor Law Board has been separated from the account of the Public Health Movement through a desire for clarity. The two subjects are really the same. Chadwick's work on the Poor Law Commission and his administration of the Act at last gave him an opportunity to develop the ideas he already had in mind when he wrote his original articles for the *London and Westminster Reviews*. By various administrative acts he had already associated the Poor Law Board with many reforms which could hardly be considered to come within the radius of its activities. And it was while he was making inquiries in this connection that he came to appreciate the need for and

the importance of reform in sanitation and public health.

“Ashley’s next piece of work,” write J. L. and Barbara Hammond in their life of Lord Shaftesbury, “brought him into close touch with a man [Chadwick] who was chiefly known for his success in making enemies, and Ashley’s own fortunes in this adventure depended less on himself than on an imperious and energetic colleague.”

“Imperious and energetic” admirably sum up Chadwick’s connection with the Public Health Board. By the time Edwin Chadwick had reached this stage in his life he was a well-known and much abused personality. As a Poor Law Commissioner he was hated by the poor because of his insistence upon the rigid enforcement of the Act; as a Factory Commissioner he had made himself unpopular with the reform party because he accused them of being associated with agitators, and because by his report he defeated, for a time, their introduction of the Ten Hour Bill. He was aware of his own unpopularity, but he was nevertheless determined to launch his greatest idea—the Sanitary Idea.

If he had considered his plans of action



more carefully he would perhaps have hesitated, he might have left the idea simmering a little longer in his mind, waited for a more favourable political opportunity, helped to collect around him a body of influential people sympathetic to his idea. But if he had done these things he would not have been Edwin Chadwick. To him the idea was the realization of his life's dream; to the Government Chadwick's ideas always entailed unpleasantness from some quarter. To him political friends (or enemies), favourable opportunities or hesitation meant more cholera deaths, more suffering; to the Government his energy meant devastating and unanswerable reports upon which immediate action had to be taken. The story is as old as history. Enthusiasm and firm determination are rarely coupled with acute diplomacy and foresight. And so Chadwick went ahead.

In 1838 the parochial authorities at Whitechapel were much disturbed by a serious outbreak of fever in a locality situated near a large stagnant pond. They knew the interest Chadwick took in all matters affecting the health of the populace and they sought his advice. This was

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Chadwick's chance and he took it eagerly. He immediately put the matter before his Commissioners and persuaded them to appoint a committee of investigation. Leave was granted, and the entire arrangements were left in his hands. A strong committee of eminent doctors sympathetic to Chadwick's ideas was formed and sent to Whitechapel. The Committee was instructed—and in this it is not difficult to see the quick mind of Chadwick at work—not only to report on the existing epidemic at Whitechapel, but on the whole sanitary condition of the Metropolis.

One of the doctors selected was Doctor Southwood Smith, a man with an international reputation on the subject of fever. In 1824 Smith had been appointed physician to the London Fever Hospital, and in 1830 he published a treatise on fever which was at once accepted as a standard authority on the question. No better man could have been found for the work required. His devotion to the cause of medicine on behalf of those stricken with fever has not been adequately stressed in the history of the Public Health Movement.

The year 1838, then, marks the beginning

of Chadwick's "great push" on behalf of better sanitary conditions. In his article on "*The Means of Assurance against the Casualties of Sickness, Decrepitude and Mortality*" in the *Westminster Review* of April, 1828, Chadwick said that "to avert or dissipate those attendant evils by the apprehension of which life is embittered and impaired" is the duty of a good Government and "that the most readily attainable means towards this end is the collection of complete information as to the circumstances under which sickness arises, together with accurate accounts of the deaths consequent upon such circumstances. . . . Accounts of this description, which perhaps at present a Government alone has the power to obtain in the requisite degree of perfection, would form an invaluable acquisition to science, and would direct the public exertions in removing those circumstances which shorten life, and in promoting those under which it is found to attain its greatest and most happy duration."

This extract, though perhaps rather an unhappy example of Chadwick's style, contains the basic principle on which he worked. He did not, of course, suggest that

any Government could be responsible for the individual's happiness. This obviously must be largely a matter of personal effort and temperament, but he did suggest that it was desirable for a Government to do all in its power to prevent avoidable conditions which might tend to shorten the life of the individual. It was Chadwick's argument that it is possible to live and yet be unhappy, but that it is impossible to be happy without life. The individual should at least be given every opportunity to live. It is useless waiting until disease has got a hold on the individual and only then making efforts to rescue him from mortality; far better to seek out the primary causes of the infection and suppress them.

It must be made clear at this stage that it was never part of Chadwick's work to cure disease in the medical sense of the word. Rather, he exposed to the indolent and ignorant the conditions inimical to their health. He proclaimed to the world that men could live longer if they took the trouble to clear away the evils which shortened human life, and it will be difficult to find any reformer in history who more clearly proved by his career the truth of his



own teaching, for Chadwick died in his ninety-first year.

The Whitechapel parochial authorities did Chadwick a remarkably good turn, when in despair they turned to him for advice, for the report, when it appeared, caused a sensation, and it gave Chadwick his first chance of pushing forward his Sanitary Idea.

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century there were no definite means of accurately ascertaining the death-rate; but from the scanty figures available it has been estimated that all through the eighteenth century there were far more deaths than births. The average death-rate in London per thousand for these hundred years was roughly thirty-six. When it is remembered that the filth of generations remained unremoved it is surprising to learn that the figure was only thirty-six. Conditions, instead of getting better, were getting worse. The enormous growth of the towns was creating great difficulties, for there was a tendency to obtain the additional accommodation required, not by extending outwards, but by building over the few remaining vacant and airy spaces. Towards

the end of the century there was a change for the better. Various bodies were set up to improve upon pavements, building, drainage and lighting. There was no system of collecting rain water into pipes which connected with a main sewer. Rain water from the roofs of houses simply poured on to the heads of pedestrians. People flung all refuse out of the window in the streets below. This was occasionally swept up into a heap and became the street's dunghill. It was then appropriated by some tradesmen who retailed it in cartloads to purchasers. Meanwhile the rotting substance gave forth moisture which ran down the streets, and as the pavements were not raised above the street level, into the houses. Since house drainage was not allowed to be connected with the storm water sewers, private cesspools were necessary. As the demand for houses increased and the regulations became less strict, builders, in order to meet the supply, built new houses on the sites of old cesspools with the result that the new houses were polluted from the moment they were erected. Moreover there was no efficient water supply.

In the provinces and in Scotland the

conditions were much the same. The new industrialism meant the overcrowding of workers in towns. To meet this overcrowding, builders, with no one to direct or control them, built ramshackle houses totally unfit for habitation. In Edinburgh and Glasgow the overcrowding in the courts and alleys was particularly bad. Mounds of filth would be heaped up in the centre of the court and would be left there stenching for weeks on end.

Then came the cholera. In 1831 it ravaged England. To attempt to give the numbers of deaths from the disease is useless for there are no accurate statistics available, but at any rate the casualties were estimated at over ten thousand. No effort was made to stem the disease. People prayed in the churches, but no action was taken. Statesmen fought over the Reform Bill whilst the filth collected in the streets. Nothing had been done when in 1838 Chadwick issued his report.

Chadwick made up in energy for any lack of tact in dealing with the Poor Law Board Commissioners for he had more than seven thousand copies of the report distributed—a great number for those days. It was the

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beginning of his great scheme, and he saw that its distribution amongst the people would have an important effect. As he anticipated, the effect was instantaneous. The report came before Parliament and greatly disturbed statesmen, politicians and influential public men. The graphic description of the chaotic water supply system as described by Doctor Southwood Smith in his independent report, and the terrible conditions dispassionately set out by the other two eminent doctors in their report roused the public mind. Here, it was thought, was something that might help towards ending this scourge of disease.

In the House of Lords the Bishop of London (Bishop Blomfield) threw his influence into the scale on Chadwick's side. The inquiry had taken place in his diocese and he had been appalled by the findings. He resolved to help Chadwick's grand design for a clean England in every possible way. He immediately urged that the Poor Law Commission be instructed to carry out an inquiry into the sanitary condition of the whole of the labouring population of Great Britain on the lines of the White-chapel report. Lord John Russell as Home



Secretary gave the necessary instructions to the Poor Law Commissioners, and by the end of August, 1839, Chadwick had begun to work the machines of inquiry, investigation and research which were to lead to the epoch-making report which appeared in 1842.

In the meantime two important events had taken place. At a public meeting at the Exeter Hall, London, in December, 1839, an Association had been formed known as "The Health of Towns Association." It was a purely propagandist organization formed with the object of stimulating interest in public health and hygiene. Amongst its members were the Marquis of Normanby, Doctor Southwood Smith, Lord Ashley, Lord Morpeth and Doctor J. R. Lynch. Doctor Lynch, whilst fighting the typhus and trying to break down the insanitary conditions in the slums of London, caught the dreaded disease himself and died of it, leaving a widow and children unprovided for. At a public meeting held to start a subscription on behalf of his wife and children, Chadwick made a forceful and sympathetic speech, showing how Doctor Lynch had earned the gratitude of all

interested in public health by his devotion to the cause of sanitation. Men from all political parties sympathetic to the new idea of public cleanliness were drawn to The Health of Towns Association, and its work in educating public opinion was valuable.

In June, 1840, R. A. Slaney, M.P., another prominent member of the Association, secured the appointment of a House of Commons Select Committee on the subject of the nation's health, which anticipated in many ways Chadwick's own report. Doctor Southwood Smith, who was only second to Chadwick in his persistent efforts to arouse public opinion, gave evidence before this Committee. Mrs. Lewes, in her *Life of Doctor Southwood Smith*, quotes him as saying: "All this suffering might be averted. These poor people are victims that are sacrificed. The effect is the same as if twenty or thirty thousand of them were annually taken out of their homes and put to death; the only difference being that they are left in them to die." Strong language! But the death of Doctor Lynch was probably in his mind, and this evidence given by a man who devoted his life to relieving human ills may be taken as an example of the

passion for reform these men put into their work.

These two events, coupled with Southwood Smith's personally conducted tours of the London slums, which unlike the usual "conducted tours" created a great impression of horror and disgust in the minds of his visitors, kept the question alive. Lord Normanby introduced into the House of Lords several small bills for alleviating the distress, but in 1841 Lord Melbourne was defeated, and Peel became Prime Minister. In 1842, under pressure from Ashley, Peel, after refusing to introduce legislation, appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts. This Commission, known as the Duke of Buccleuch's Commission (the Duke was Chairman), issued its first report in 1844. So for the first six months of the year 1842 two commissions on public health were taking evidence and drawing up reports. And Chadwick conducted both of them: for needless to say the Duke of Buccleuch, realizing that Chadwick was a master in the art of collecting information, handed over to him the entire organization of his commission.

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The Poor Law Commission Report was presented to Sir James Graham, Home Secretary in Sir Robert Peel's Government, on the 9th July, 1842. This report, nominally the Report of the Commissioners, was really entirely drawn up by Chadwick and is one of the most important documents in the history of the first half of the nineteenth century. For besides initiating a devastating attack on the private interests responsible for the deplorable sanitary condition of England, it draws a vivid picture of the life led by the labouring population. The veil of secrecy and pretence is drawn aside and real conditions are shown.

In a short book it is impossible for the author to devote as much space as he would wish to extracts from this report (it contains four hundred and fifty-seven pages) and to the ideals which prompted Chadwick to pursue his object. Four extracts alone must suffice. The first gives an example of the difficulties with which he had to contend. The local authorities still wallowed in the customs, methods and traditions of the Middle Ages; and in spite of the advances in science, machinery and government they were still content to leave



things alone and to go on as they had always gone on in the same old stupid way.

“The Parish officers frequently oppose improved modes of paving and efficient cleansing (as they generally opposed the new police on the ground that it diminished the means of subsistence of decrepit old men as watchmen) for the avowed reason that it is expedient to keep the streets in their present state of filth in order to keep up the means of employing indigent persons as street sweepers and sweepers of crossings in removing it.”<sup>1</sup>

Again, with regard to the cleaning of the streets in a city like Manchester, the report says :

“The expense of cleansing the streets of the township of Manchester is five thousand pounds per annum. For this sum the first class streets are cleansed once a week, the second class once a fortnight and the third class once a month. But this leaves untouched the courts, alleys and places

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population, 1842.

where the poorest live and where the cleansing should be daily.”<sup>1</sup>

Later he compares the homes of the labouring population with the conditions existing in the prisons :

“ The examination of loathsome prisons has gained one individual a national and European celebrity. Yet we have seen that there are whole streets of houses composing some of the wynds of Glasgow and Edinburgh and great numbers of the courts in London and the older towns in England, in which the condition of every inhabited room and the physical condition of the inmates is even more horrible than the worst of the dungeons that Howard ever visited.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally he sums up by recapitulating the chief conclusions which the evidence seemed to him to establish :

“ The various forms of epidemic, endemic, and other disease, caused or aggravated, or propagated chiefly amongst the labouring

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population, 1842.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

classes by atmospheric impurities produced by decomposing animal and vegetable substances, by damp and filth and close and overcrowding dwellings, prevail . . . in every part of the Kingdom. . . . That such disease, wherever its attacks are frequent, is always found in connection with the physical circumstances above specified, and that where those circumstances are removed by drainage, proper cleansing, better ventilation, and other means of diminishing atmospheric impurity, the frequency and intensity of such disease are abated. . . . That the formation of all habits of cleanliness is obstructed by defective supplies of water. That the annual loss of life from filth and bad sanitation is greater than the loss from death or wounds in any wars in which the country has been engaged in modern times."<sup>1</sup>

It may be of interest to quote here an extract from Charles Kingsley's novel *Two Years Ago*: for Kingsley's hero Thomas Thurnall is an exact prototype of Edwin Chadwick. In answering the question from a local clergyman as to why he (Thurnall)

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population, 1842.

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incurs odium in a cause that is all but hopeless he gives the magnificent reply :

“ Well, I do it because I like it. It’s a sort of sporting with your true doctor. He blazes away at a disease where he sees one, as he would at a bear or a lion; the very sight of it excites his organ of destructiveness. Don’t you understand me? You hate sin, you know. Well, I hate disease. Moral evil is your devil, and physical evil is mine. I hate it, little or big; I hate to see a fellow sick; I hate to see a child rickety and pale; I hate to see a speck of dirt in the street; I hate to see a woman’s gown torn; I hate to see her stockings down at heel; I hate to see anything wasted, anything awry, anything going wrong; I hate to see water-power wasted, manure wasted, land wasted, muscle wasted, pluck wasted, brains wasted; I hate neglect, incapacity, idleness, ignorance and all the disease and misery which spring out of that. There’s my devil; and I can’t help, for the life of me, going right at his throat, wheresoever I meet him.”

That in one long paragraph is a photograph of Sir Edwin Chadwick’s soul. No



additions or alterations could make a better picture of the burning passion within the man.

The Duke of Buccleuch's Commission issued its first report in 1844. The conclusions arrived at were similar to those of the Poor Law Commissioners, except that the investigations had been conducted on a larger scale and were in consequence of more importance. And yet nothing was done. The political controversy over Free Trade was raging. The 'Anti-Corn Law League was carrying on extensive propaganda campaigns. The country was flooded with lecturers and speakers. Large sums of money were collected and spent in extending the campaign to the rural districts. Manufacturers vied with landowners for the sympathetic ear of public opinion. The struggle was fierce and prolonged. Eventually in May, 1846, Peel, himself a convert, carried the Repeal with the help of his political opponents. In June he was defeated by another combination, and Lord John Russell became Prime Minister.

Lord Morpeth, afterwards seventh Earl of Carlisle, an able, cultivated man, was

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appointed Commissioner of Woods and Forests in Russell's Government, and in 1847 he introduced a bill to give effect to the recommendations of Chadwick's two Commissions, but mainly owing to bad draughtsmanship it was defeated. In February, 1848, Lord Morpeth reintroduced his Bill, which passed into law as the first Public Health Act.

Before this Act nobody—that is to say no Government Department—was responsible for the cleansing or lighting of streets, the supply of water, the paving and making of roads or houses, or the sanitary arrangements of the towns. All these essential services were left in the hands of private enterprise, which profited at the expense of the public. Each corporation had different charters which had been granted them by private bills from the House of Commons. The result was chaotic. There was no attempt at centralization or uniformity. The feverish rush for production had been allowed to develop unchecked, and the labouring classes, with no voice in the government of the country in which they lived, were forced to inhabit slums from which builders, landowners and landlords

drew handsome profits. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835 had not been sufficiently far-reaching in its scope to be allowed to deal with these essential services of public health.

It is not difficult, nearly seventy years after the event, to point out the mistakes Chadwick made in his recommendations for improving these conditions. It is easy to see now, in the light of later legislation, where his plan failed, but making allowances for these faults it must be admitted that he was the initiator of a series of reforms in the relationship between central and local government. These reforms compelled the local authorities to adopt and maintain a certain standard of efficiency demanded by the State.

The Act recommends that the Crown supervise, administer, and inspect the sanitary law for large towns and populous districts; that the powers of the local authorities be extended so as to cover a larger area, and that they be granted wider administrative powers; that drainage, cleansing of streets, paving, lighting and water supply be all brought under one authority in each district; that a General Board of

Health be established composed of three members (later a medical doctor was added); that this General Board have power, on petition from a certain number of the rate-payers, to appoint local boards to control water-supply, drainage, and burial grounds; that a proper system of ventilation be adopted in all public buildings and schools; and finally that local authorities have the power to appoint Medical Officers to report upon the sanitary condition of towns or districts.

The Board appointed under the Act consisted of Lord Morpeth, representing the Government, Lord Ashley, and Chadwick. Doctor Southwood Smith was added later. The six years of the Board's life, considered as a whole, were a failure. It carried out many praiseworthy reforms. It had bad luck. It had many formidable opponents, but it was wrongly conceived from the beginning, and from this bad start it never recovered.

The Board was not responsible to Parliament. The Government representative was on the Board as a Commissioner not as an executive officer with control. So although the Board was paid for out of the State's funds and the country was taxed to provide



the salaries of its members, it could administer, advise, and control without the consent of the representatives of the people, and without having anybody to defend its actions in the House of Commons. Under the Act the Board was established for five years, which meant in effect that no amendments, alterations or criticisms could be made by Parliament until the Act again came before Parliament for renewal.

It was both bureaucratic and yet not bureaucratic enough. At the request of a certain number of ratepayers it could appoint a Local Board. Having done so, however, it could not control it but could only offer advice. This was an obvious defect. It was irritating to the inhabitants of the town who did not want a Local Board to have one forced on them; it was also irritating to the enthusiasts to have a Board appointed and then to find that the Central Board had no control over the local authorities, who could if they wished—and they often did—turn a deaf ear to the advice and suggestions from Whitehall.

The Central Board made no attempt to educate the local authorities. It would have been better to encourage the Municipalities

to adopt public health schemes. No effort was made to induce the people to swallow the pill and accept the new proposals. "Grants in aid" would have been an incentive, but instead of that the Commissioners tried to bully the people, and adopted an attitude of superiority utterly unsuitable to the intricate relation between central and local government.

In spite of these disadvantages the Board in its General Report (1848-54) was able to indicate much useful work which it had accomplished. Two hundred and forty-eight districts had applied to come under the Act. Over twelve hundred meetings had been held, and over a hundred thousand letters had been answered by the active and enthusiastic Commissioners. Maps of districts and works were well in hand. The Board proudly stated that public opinion was welcoming their activities; that they had forced the people to pay attention to their environment, and that the expenses in connection with the Board had been justified.

On the other hand there was active and virulent opposition. In the first place there were the anti-centralists. In Joshua

Toulmin Smith this opposition found an ardent and vigorous leader. Smith was a publicist and lawyer with an almost distressing literary activity. As a young man he went to Boston, but returned to England and settled at Highgate in 1842. He at once took an interest in the local affairs of the neighbourhood, and in 1847 did excellent work in calling public attention to the lack of caution and care taken against the dreaded approach of cholera. At this point in his career he came into violent conflict with Chadwick, and adopted as his life's task the dull work of trying to prove by lengthy, ponderous books and pamphlets that the vestry was the main cog in the wheel of local government. He delved into ancient law to assert that the historic principles of local government were all based on the parish, and that centralization was a wrong and pernicious idea. All authority should proceed from the parish council outwards and not from the central government downwards. This was in opposition to Chadwick's principle of creating highly specialized departments for dealing with the new conditions, but nevertheless the two did agree that something immediate must be

done to rouse the people from their lethargy. By a curious twist of circumstances the party most antagonistic to Chadwick in his scheme for centralization was led by a man who was active on behalf of efficient local self-government, but who opposed the only possible method of improvement on the ground that centralization was historically illegal. Chadwick's opponents, whilst not in the least interested in Toulmin Smith's historical proofs, were pleased to find an able leader.

In the second place there was a host of monopolists opposed to the Board. Landlords, undertakers, contractors and corporations all raised strong objections. Their interests were at stake. These people, who were making their living out of the filth and dirt of the towns, were naturally furious at having their monopolies taken away from them by a Board which they considered to be lacking in experience in such matters as sanitation, drainage and sanitary engineering. In this respect the members of the Board undoubtedly erred. They were doctrinaire and aggressive. They were not altogether well-informed in matters of sanitary science and building. Their



methods were often clumsy and scientifically wrong. This was characteristic of them. They trusted no one, believed in no one, and thought that every man's hand was against them. They were apt to seek no advice but their own and they were often in the wrong.

In Edwin Hodder's biography of Lord Shaftesbury details of the attacks on the Board are recorded from his diary. On 31st December, 1852, Shaftesbury writes :

“Will our enemies succeed in destroying the only institution that stands for the physical and social improvement of the people? Our foes are numerous, and I dread their success; it would vex me beyond expression to see Chadwick and Southwood Smith sent to the right-about, and the Board, which, under God, has done and conceived so many good things, broken up.”

Again, on 9th August, 1853, he records the various people who oppose the Board and their reasons for doing so :

“The Parliamentary agents are our sworn enemies, because we have reduced

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expenses, and, consequently, their fees, within reasonable limits. The civil engineers also, because we have selected able men, who have carried into effect new principles, and at a less salary. The College of Physicians, and all its dependencies, because of our independent action and singular success in dealing with the cholera, when we maintained and proved that many a Poor Law medical officer knew more than all the flash and fashionable doctors of London. All the Boards of Guardians : for we exposed their selfishness, their cruelty, their reluctance to meet and relieve the suffering poor, in the days of the epidemic. The Treasury besides (for the subalterns there hated Chadwick ; it was an ancient grudge, and paid when occasion served). Then come the water companies, whom we laid bare, and devised a method of supply, which altogether superseded them. The Commissioners of Sewers, for our plans and principles were the reverse of theirs ; they hated us with a perfect hatred."

Under the original Act the Board had been set up for five years. In 1853, owing to a further visit of cholera, Parliament was

induced to prolong its life by one year, but in 1854 the end came. The agitation was successful, and the movement for better public hygiene came to an abrupt end. The tragedy of the ending is revealed in the speeches made in the House of Commons against the renewal of the Act, for it was the blood of Chadwick that was wanted. Most speakers wanted to prolong the Board in some way or another, but none would have a good word to say for the man who had devoted the greater part of his public life to bringing the atrocious sanitary conditions of the country before their eyes. They saw in him a man fighting against private property and private interests; they saw in him a man whose energy they distrusted and disliked; they saw in him a man who was a danger to their comfort and prosperity. This point of view was well expressed by *The Times* which wrote: "Æsculapius and Chiron, in the form of Mr. Chadwick and Dr. Southwood Smith, have been deposed, and we prefer to take our chance of cholera and the rest, than to be bullied into health." The following passage from the same paper is also worth quoting as it shows the prejudice and hatred

Toulmin Smith and his followers had stirred up against the local Boards: "It was a perpetual Saturday night, and Master John Bull was scrubbed and rubbed and small-tooth-combed till the tears ran into his eyes, and his teeth chattered, and his fists clenched themselves with worry and pain."

On 31st July, 1854, Lord Seymour opposed the Government's proposal to renew the Act. Lord Palmerston gave a spirited defence as well as making several important concessions. Lord Shaftesbury made an eloquent appeal on behalf of the Board, pointing out many of the great services it had rendered to the country. But it was no good. The House was determined that the Chadwick *régime* should cease and the Government was defeated. On the same day Lord Shaftesbury wrote in his diary:

"No choice of resigning or remaining; the House of Commons threw out the Bill this day. . . . Thus, after five years of intense and unrewarded labour, I am turned off like a piece of lumber! Such is the public service. Some years hence if we are remembered, justice may be done to us; but not in our lifetimes. I have never



known a wrong by the public redressed so that the sufferer could enjoy the reparation, for

“ ‘ Nations slowly wise and meanly just,  
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.’ ”

Parliament then made arrangements for a new Board of Health with powers vested in the Privy Council and the Home Office. Sir John Simon, formerly Medical Officer for the City of London, was appointed Medical Officer to this new Board. There was also a paid President. In 1871 the Local Government Board took over these duties, and in 1875 a Public Health Act was passed establishing a system of administration under the Local Government Board. But still no central authority was set up. This administration, though an improvement on previous attempts, was nothing like adequate enough. The work was too extensive, too complicated and too specialized to be added to the shoulders of an already overburdened Department. What was wanted was a Ministry of Health, with a specialized staff working under a secretariat with a Minister and an Under Secretary responsible to Parliament.

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By his agitation Chadwick sowed the seed for this reform, which eventually came into operation in 1918 with Christopher Addison as first Minister of Health. It was the truth that Lord Shaftesbury wrote when he said, "justice may be done to us; but not in our lifetimes," but who will now question that the great fight which Chadwick waged between the years 1838-48 for the better sanitation of the country was not a victory of solid achievement in the history of nineteenth century reform? Ignoring for the moment the defects in Chadwick's character which so often made him a target for abuse, forgetting the faulty constitution of the first Public Health Board and the just accusation that its mode of procedure was peremptory and dictatorial, omitting the fierce antagonism to the idea of centralization—putting aside all these contingent facts, it is impossible not to agree wholeheartedly with Sir John Simon that the drastic changes which were put into operation during this decade were "directly due to the zealous labours of one eminent public servant, Sir Edwin Chadwick."<sup>1</sup>

Retirement with a pension of a thousand

<sup>1</sup> *English Sanitary Institutions.*

pounds a year at the age of fifty-four was Chadwick's reward. He had fought hard if too vigorously; he had been a zealous administrator if bureaucratic in his outlook; he had met abuse with hard work, agitation with counter agitation, personal hatred with no show of resentment. To all outward appearances he was beaten and his Sanitary Idea had failed: but he must have known within himself that his name would be written in bold type across the pages of the history of sanitation.

## CHAPTER VI

### MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

WITHIN the small compass of a book such as this, those of Chadwick's activities which cannot properly be classified under the various chapter headings but which are nevertheless important, must be included in one chapter. If in the planning of this book Chadwick's life story had been contemplated, these activities would naturally have been included as they occurred, but it has been thought best to collect them here under the heading of "miscellaneous" and to outline them in chronological order.

#### *The Half-Time System of Education*

In 1833, when the Factory Commission was making its inquiries into the conditions of child labour, Chadwick was appalled at



the uneducated state of the factory children. It struck him forcibly that these children were being reared in a state of abject mental ignorance, and he foresaw the inevitable result that such treatment would have upon future generations.

The position of education at that time was deplorable. A scheme of universal national education had never been seriously suggested. Even Chadwick did not get as far as that. If parents had sufficient income they sent their children to school, but where these means were hardly sufficient to keep the parents alive the children were sent to the factories at the earliest possible age in order to augment the family income. The inevitable consequence of this was that these children were employed in the factories for such hours that physical debility precluded them from having any mental instruction whatever. In an earlier chapter a short account has been given of the physical condition the children were brought to by the long hours they were forced to work at the factories. Chadwick's prescription for this was threefold. Firstly, he would shorten the hours of their labour; secondly, he would institute compulsory education;

and thirdly, he would inaugurate a system of physical training.

In an essay on *The Duties of Government for the Education of the People* Chadwick writes: "There can be no safety from the most fearful outrages against life and property, but in the intelligence and moral feeling of the labouring classes. The Government should, therefore, in the first place, be imperatively required to abolish entirely every fiscal import that can operate, directly or indirectly, to obstruct the diffusion of knowledge among the people." Chadwick had this in view when he drew up his report on the factory conditions.

Broadly speaking, Chadwick's scheme divided up the lives of the child factory worker into three divisions—a time for book work, a time for physical play and exercise, and a time for productive labour. Chadwick and his fellow Commissioners pronounced that six hours a day was the limit the State could afford to allow the children to work in the factories. The previous hours had been from nine to anything up to thirteen hours a day. Chadwick proposed a scheme, known as the half-time system, of six hours

a day work and three hours learning. A further condition of employment in the factory was that each child should produce a certificate from a competent teacher certifying that the child had been under scholastic instruction for three hours a day for the preceding week.

This scheme was not embodied in the Poor Law Amendment Act, but Chadwick agitated for its incorporation in the administration of the Act. Many intelligent manufacturers and Poor Law district schools took up the idea, with the result that the whole theory of juvenile education underwent a change for the good. It must be understood that the three hours education did not necessarily mean three continuous hours of book work. Chadwick was particularly interested in games, drill and physical exercises, and these were included in the instruction.

The scheme, inadequate as it was, had a tremendous effect on the development, both physical and mental, of the children. Nervous disorder, spinal diseases, crooked limbs and hysteria began slowly to be less prevalent. Enormous advances in the science of teaching and training children

were yet to be made, but Chadwick was indeed a friend to the coming generations, for by his persistent efforts he prepared the way for the full development of childhood along the lines of reason rather than of profit.

### *Intemperance*

In 1834 J. Silk Buckingham was presiding over a House of Commons Committee on Drunkenness. To this Committee Chadwick was summoned to give evidence. His evidence, which was afterwards collected into essay form, was practical and full of common sense.

Chadwick was not a total abstainer, but from his experience as an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner he had been impressed with the distressing results of intemperance, especially among the poorer classes. He was a firm friend of any politician of whatever party who advocated the restriction of the indiscriminate output of alcoholic drinks.

His evidence shows that once again he was not afraid to probe to the bottom of the



question at issue. To his mind the question was: What causes men to drink excessively? His evidence answered his own query.

If healthy athletic exercise and recreation were encouraged amongst the mass of the population; if decent, clean refreshment shops replaced the vulgarly gorgeous gin palaces; if sanitary dwellings were erected in the place of the hovels which housed the population; if parks and public places were instituted for the benefit of the people; if the transaction of business within the precincts of the public houses was prohibited by law; and if a heavy tax was imposed upon the traffic in liquor—if all these reforms were carried out, then the question of drunkenness would subside.

The Committee took due note of this very advanced view, and in course of time reported its decision, which was in agreement with Chadwick's evidence, to a derisive House of Commons.

Nevertheless, what Chadwick said then in his evidence before that House of Commons Committee is largely true to-day. Any worker in the slums of modern England will substantiate Chadwick's statement that

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the principal causes of intemperance among the working classes are the disgraceful conditions under which they live. Drink enables them, temporarily at least, to forget their hardships, their lack of proper food, their inadequate clothing and shelter. The temptation is persistent, and great strength of character is required if it is to be resisted.

Until these causes are removed and the lives of the working classes made happier and healthier, intemperance will remain a curse to modern society.

### *The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages*

In the course of his duties as Secretary to the Poor Law Board Chadwick discovered himself greatly hampered by a lack of knowledge regarding the birth and death rate. He saw that if a careful and accurate registration of these were made it would be invaluable service to the community.

To know definitely how many people died

per annum from one particular disease; to compare the birth-rate of London with that of Manchester or the infantile death-rate in Glasgow with the infantile death-rate in Bristol; or, again, to be able to tell from the statistics the number of deaths from natural causes as compared with deaths from accidents: if all this could be tabulated by a department of the State Chadwick saw of what inestimable importance it would be.

Chadwick had had the scheme in his mind when the Poor Law Commission was at work, but he did not see a favourable opportunity of incorporating it in his report. But about 1836 a movement took place among the Dissenters agitating that the registration of births, deaths and marriages should be recorded not only by the Church but by the State as well. This civil registration had, in fact, taken place for a short time during the Commonwealth, but had since died out.

Immediately Chadwick heard that a Bill was actually before Parliament for the re-establishment of this civil registration, he applied to Lord John Russell to insert a clause to insure that when a death was

registered the cause of death should be certified. But Russell turned a deaf ear, or to use Chadwick's own phrase, could not "be got to take hold of the idea." In distress Chadwick applied to Lord Lyndhurst, ex-Lord Chancellor in Peel's administration and now Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords. Lord Lyndhurst, acting swiftly, incorporated Chadwick's most important ideas in the Bill, which passed through both Houses without difficulty and became law in 1838.

As usual the law differed in many respects from the original plan as thought out by Chadwick. In an essay on *Life Values* Chadwick had laid down that the objects to be attained by the suggested registrar-general were :

"(1) The registration of the causes of disease, with a view to devising remedies or means of prevention.

"(2) The determination of the salubrity of places in different situations, with a view to individual settlements and public establishments.

"(3) The determination of comparative degrees of salubrity, as between occupation



itself and occupation in places differently circumstanced, in order that persons willing to engage in insalubrious occupations may be the more effectually enabled to obtain adequate provision for their loss of health.

“(4) The collection of data for calculating the rate of mortality, and giving safety to the immense mass of property insured, so as to enable everyone to employ his money to the best advantage for his own behalf, or for the benefit of persons dear to him; and that without the impression of loss to anyone else.

“(5) The obtainment of a means of ascertaining the progress of population at different periods, and under differing circumstances.

“(6) The direction of the mind of the Government and of the people to the extent and effects of calamities and casualties; the prevention of undue interments; concealed murder; and deaths from culpable heedlessness or negligence.”

This quotation is given in full because it shows that at the early age of twenty-eight Chadwick had a rich and full mind, and that

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he was eminently practical, courageous and far-seeing.

Chadwick had proposed that the clerks to the Poor Law Unions should be the district registrars for births, deaths and marriages and that the medical officers of the unions should be required to record the causes of deaths. He also proposed that the country should be subject to an annual census. All these proposals were altered in the Act during its passage through Parliament. The registrars, it was decided, were to be elected by the Poor Law Guardians; the medical recorders of the deaths were to be the medical attendants of the deceased; and the annual census was altered to one in every ten years.

For the posts of Registrar-General and his assistant, Chadwick agitated for the appointment of a well-known scholar and a distinguished doctor respectively. He was successful in his nomination for the second in command. Doctor William Farr proved an unqualified success and was largely responsible for the excellent results which were obtained during his long tenure of office (1838-1880).

By this scheme of registering, estimating,

calculating and tabulating, Chadwick had enabled the Registrar-General to determine facts about drainage, water supply, death-rates, birth-rates, and the general condition of inhabitants of town and country which had hitherto been impossible. He had lit a light in dark places so that men could more easily see to live.

### *The Constabulary Commission*

On 26th October, 1838, Chadwick was appointed to a commission which was "to inquire into the best means of establishing an efficient constabulary force in the counties of England and Wales with a view to the prevention of crime." Towards the end of March in the following year the report was issued. It contained all Chadwick's well-known theories about getting at the removable antecedents of crime and the prevention of crime.

Chadwick had taken as much interest in the prevention of crime as he had in the prevention of disease and poverty. On this Commission he reaffirmed the principles he

had laid down in the *London Review* in an article on *Preventive Police* in 1829. Sir Robert Peel's Act dealing with the police force in the metropolitan area was doing useful service, but Chadwick was not satisfied that the conditions existing in the counties were either efficient or adequate. So he pressed Lord John Russell to appoint a further Commission, and was himself, with two others, appointed to make the inquiry.

In the course of his Poor Law inquiries Chadwick had had ample opportunity for investigating facts about the methods of the police, and now he supplemented these inquiries by an exhaustive examination of the criminals themselves.

The report of the Commission advocated that the existing system of disjointed organization under the control of different public bodies each with a different set of regulations should be done away with. In the place of this undisciplined mob a system of closely co-ordinated and well organized police should be instituted, with one set of rules and regulations governing the whole body. This new force should act upon the principle of preventing crime and public



calamities and not merely of punishing offenders. It should preserve public peace and order, and should be prepared to undertake useful functions on behalf of public welfare.

Effect was only given to some of the recommendations of the Commission. Yet it was soon seen that the cost of the new scheme, with all its additional expenses of organization and equipment, was less than that of the old-fashioned, inefficient and unpaid parish constables.

### *Interments in Towns*

In 1843 Sir James Graham requested Chadwick to submit a report on Interments in Towns as a supplementary to the Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population. This subject had for some time past been agitating the public mind, and Chadwick's report was the final complete statement thereon. The report has now served its purpose and the question is no longer so vital and urgent as it was eighty years ago. Although rather distasteful and

unpleasant it was then a matter of great importance. Chadwick entered upon his task with his usual energy and zeal. He made his investigations among the clergy, who performed the funeral rites, among the working classes, among the officers of burial clubs and societies, among undertakers and those employed in the burial of the dead, and among those of his foreign friends who were acquainted with the mode of procedure in other countries.

Of all Chadwick's reports perhaps this on the burial of the dead is the most brilliant, comprehensive and interesting. Besides being a wonderfully clear statement of fact, it gives a vivid description of a certain phase in the social history of England in the first half of the nineteenth century. But Chadwick was never content with mere investigation of evils, and the report contains suggestions for drastic remedies and reforms.

"It proposed," writes Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, "in its recommendations to make the whole system of the interment of the dead a national system, national as to proscribed methods, and national also as to the principle of carrying the process out

on one uniform design.” Once again the recommendations were not completely carried out. Once again Chadwick had to submit to a compromise, but he obtained many important reforms. The intramural system of burial, which allowed the burial of the dead within vaults of churches, was done away with, and the principle of an extra-mural interment in cemeteries outside the town was made compulsory, whilst the overcrowded church graveyards in towns and cities were closed. Chadwick gave ample evidence in his report to prove his contention that, especially among the poorer classes, the retention of the body in the house for days and sometimes weeks until sufficient money for the burial had been collected, was injurious to the live inhabitants, and a direct encouragement to insanitation and disease. In his report he planned for the provision of mortuaries to which the dead could be removed while awaiting burial, thus preventing the possible spread of infectious disease and allaying the fear of premature interments.

As a result of his report Chadwick received much correspondence. Thomas Carlyle’s views are interesting and the following

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extract from a letter to Chadwick dated 3rd April, 1850, from Chelsea is taken from Richardson's *The Health of Nations*:

“DEAR CHADWICK,—I unluckily have no horse at present, and know not when I shall, though I often grumble about the want of one—the state of the hepatic regions not being good at all. Some days I go out in utter despair and walk four hours over the heaths on the Surrey side, rushing to and fro, all alone, in a very rabid humour—getting a little good, however, by the operation after all!

“The intramural interment practice is a kind of thing that chokes one's very soul. I think such irreverence to the sacred existence of man was never done before by any of the posterity of Adam; the thing oppresses me with a feeling quite chaotic, almost more than infernal, such irreligion presided over by the shovel-hat was never heard of till now! I have long been of opinion that the dead, in large towns, ought all to be buried in the Roman fashion, by burning; one *rogus* each morning for all



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the dead (which would come very cheap, and might be very solemn), and a rich individual might have a funeral pile to himself if he were of mind to pay for it.

“ This, I think, will be the real remedy, so soon as men are prepared for it ; but Semitic and other rubbish lies in the way yet.

“ Yours ever truly,

“ T. CARLYLE.”

Carlyle's theory is still far from being the recognized fashion, but the method of disposal of the dead by cremation is gaining ground. Chadwick, making allowances for sentiment and religion, always maintained that the destruction of the dead body by fire was the most sanitary solution of the problem.

### *Paris*

“ Fair above, Sire, and foul below ” is reported to have been Chadwick's reply to Napoleon III on being asked by the Emperor what he thought of Paris. But according to Richardson this smart retort was never made. His real answer was : “ Sire, they

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say that Augustus found Rome a city of brick, and left it a city of marble. If your Majesty, finding Paris fair above, will leave it sweet below, you will more than rival the first Emperor of Rome.”

This conversation took place at one of the many interviews between Chadwick and Napoleon III when the former was in Paris on what he described as an “instructive holiday.” The years 1855-6 were the years of the Paris exhibition and Chadwick’s “instructive holiday” was spent in sight-seeing at the exhibition, and investigating the sanitary principles and ideas current at the capital at that time. From his reply to the Emperor it was obvious that Chadwick was not greatly impressed with what he had seen, and he quickly persuaded the Emperor to hold an inquiry into the sanitary condition of Paris.

Chadwick’s work on behalf of sanitary science and hygiene was much appreciated in France, and his reports and various papers had a wide circulation. The appreciation of the country was shown when he was elected a corresponding member of the Academy of Moral and Political Science of the Institute of France. The following

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extract from the *Revue Internationale* showed a sense of deep gratitude to a man who had been tireless in his energies on behalf of world sanitation :

“*M. Chadwick est une des gloires de l'Angleterre. Il a quatre-vingt-sept ans, et il est pour l'Angleterre ce qu'est M. Chevreul pour la France.*”

### *Parliament*

Chadwick was a great man, an impressive character and an able administrator, but he would have been futile as a parliamentarian. In the House of Commons he would have been laughed at for his sincerity. His long rambling speeches would have bored members, and his fierce aggressive manner would have been derided. Nevertheless in 1867 he stood as a candidate for the University of London, and proposals were put forward at different times that he should stand as a candidate for Evesham and Kilmarnock Burghs. None of these, however, came to anything.

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In his address to the electors of the University Chadwick presented himself as what would now be called an Independent. His address was a *précis* of his life's work. He made no efforts at canvassing the electors, but told them in plain unadorned language what he had done, and the motives which had inspired him. He mentioned education and the half-time system, and stressed the point that he had been one of the earliest enthusiasts for the full development of the University. He pointed out that he had been the first to recognize the necessity for legislation to safeguard workmen employed in building the railways from negligence on the part of the employers, and had even advocated the nationalization of these public highways—as already carried out in other countries. He also referred to his work on behalf of public health.

His candidature is interesting for the support he received from well-known men, among whom was John Stuart Mill. Probably no one understood or appreciated Chadwick's administrative powers better than Mill, and the following extract from a letter from Mill addressed to him in support



of his candidature showed how deeply his services had been valued :

“ No one whom I know of has devoted so great a portion of his life, or so great an amount of mental power, as you have done, to the study of the scientific principles of administration. The course of your official life has continually brought you into contact with the most difficult administrative problems, and . . . there is hardly one on which you have not originated thoughts, and suggestions of the greatest value. . . . On several of the most important branches of public administration, you add to your knowledge of principles a knowledge of details which few can rival. I need only mention the Sanitary Department, the importance of which, now so widely recognized, you were among the very first to press upon a careless public ; the various branches of the administration of relief to the destitute ; and many parts of the great subject of the education of the poor. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of his essay setting forth what he had done for the nation, and in spite of Mill's support the electors of the

<sup>1</sup> Richardson, *The Health of Nations*, quoted.

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University, to the secret gratification and relief of his friends, did not return him to Parliament.

Chadwick outside Parliament was a source of constant terror to Government and Opposition alike. Chadwick inside Parliament would have been like a wild bird in a cage.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

**I**N making a summary of Chadwick's life, in estimating his place among the Roadmakers of the British Isles, we start by acknowledging him as a great worker. From the time of his first appointment he worked continuously, methodically and successfully at several subjects. But hard work alone does not constitute a roadmaker. The work must be of value to the country, must open up a new avenue for progress.

The conditions of the Poor Law before 1834 were such that it was necessary for a man of iron will and superlative energy to administer the new Act. The nadir of demoralization and inefficiency had been reached. Drastic enforcement of the new law was essential at once if the country was to be saved from revolution. Quickly grasping the central fact that demoralization had

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set in at the core, Chadwick worked by administering, by advising and by sheer strength of character to cut away the rotten idea that wages could be paid out of Poor Relief, and to substitute in its place the idea of man's right to a living wage for honest work done. That is the supreme work of Chadwick's administration of the New Poor Law. He remade a demoralized, unwanted, disgraced animal into a man.

The Act was harsh and even brutal, but the situation was desperate. To-day surgical operations are performed at short notice to save people from lives of lingering torture. It was thus with the New Poor Law. The root evil had to be cut out at once: and Chadwick, thwarted by a strenuous opposition, abused most by those people he was to benefit, forced his unwilling Commissioners to administer the Act and so perform the first essential operation.

As the originator of the scheme for the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Chadwick deserves gratitude for a highly important service to the country. At a time when the population was increasing by leaps and bounds, when cholera was claiming its thousands, he pressed forward



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this scheme, which, though it passed almost unnoticed into law, is now of the utmost importance for Government statistics and to the medical profession and to the world at large. His work for this scheme was the work of an agitator. Chadwick did not administer the registration, he did not even invent the idea. But having seen its importance he agitated successfully for its introduction. He was a born agitator.

Some men are born satisfied, some dissatisfied. Some of these latter understand that the mechanism of the world's work is faulty. They appreciate that the machine creaks. They stammer and stutter dissatisfaction. They prophesy destruction—and the world laughs. Others utter meaningless perorations on the need for reform until their throats are dry from the flow of their words : these are the bores of the world. Others vituperate against a system and clamour for its overthrow though they have nothing but vague unthought-out theories to put in its place : these are a danger to the world. And some, agitating for the removal of evils, have practical remedies to apply : and these are the salvation of the world.

Such a man was Chadwick. It is impos-

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sible to think of the evils he tackled without realizing that he always had schemes to put in their place. They may have been poor schemes, mistaken schemes, but nevertheless he never agitated against an evil without first committing himself to a positive reform. Indeed it is to his credit that many of the improvements for which he agitated are still in force to-day. Again, as an agitator he worked his will not on individuals for their or his own benefit, but on public bodies, on corporations and even on governments—which fact enormously increased the difficulties of his task.

To agitate, to administer and to work strenuous hours require a fourth accomplishment, which was possessed by Chadwick. He was an indefatigable investigator. Nothing was too much trouble for him. No work was so hard, no situation so deep that he would not investigate it for himself with indomitable courage, keen insight and a thirst for knowledge. With Chadwick it was not simply a question of hearing evidence, but of actual personal investigation. He risked his life over and over again when making inquiries into the sanitary conditions of the large towns. He was thus

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in a position to see as well as to hear the facts about the case he was investigating. It was impossible to prevent him. He was forced by his inquiring nature into the middle of the morass. Knee deep he made his notes and put his questions. A master of detail, he displayed his facts with clearness and backed them with unanswerable statistics. Few flaws could be found, for he rarely made mistakes, and he seemed to have a genius for getting at the essentials of the matter in hand.

Thus we have seen that he was a worker, an administrator, an agitator and an investigator. By training he was neither a statesman nor a medical doctor. Yet in a sense he was both. He did not legislate in the House of Commons, it is true, but he agitated and prepared bills for other people to do so. He was a statesman in so far as he worked out schemes (based on Bentham's *Constitutional Code*) for the welfare of the nation. And he was a doctor in the sense that he worked to prevent illness. "To get at the root of the matter which causes sickness" was his aim. He regarded most doctors with abhorrence. He argued that they were social parasites existing on those

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ills which man has created by his surroundings. "Prevention is better than cure" is a well-worn proverb, but it does accurately describe Chadwick's attitude towards disease.

In comparing Chadwick with his contemporaries it is not difficult to see wherein he outshone them all. Lord Shaftesbury, an eager humanitarian socialist, softened the crude indifference of his age, but as an administrator he was singularly modest. Richard Cobden, with all his marvellous oratorical powers and his fervent hatred of the Corn Laws, was successful in that one instance only, and afterwards became an ardent opponent of reform in other directions. Robert Owen founded a new religion which has steadily grown and expanded since his death, but cannot be said to have been more than a model employer in a new industrial era. William Cobbett, whose journalistic efforts had great effect at the time of their publication, was a passionate teacher with no great knowledge, who spent a varied and interesting life defending the underdog by a wholesome trouncing of the men who held the whip hand.

All these men have an honoured place in history. All are better known to the general



public than Chadwick : but when we come to investigate the socio-political history of the nineteenth century we are astonished to find the influence of Chadwick confronting us at every turn. It is curious that the important political movements of the time—the franchise reform of 1832 and the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846—seem to have left him unmoved, but they serve to overshadow his work in other directions and leave him unnoticed amidst the flares of political controversy.

To arrive at a true understanding of the social philosophy which governs a man's life it is often necessary to consider his work as a whole, but in Chadwick's case his earliest essays, which attracted the attention of the radical philosophers, contain the conception of his social philosophy. Broadly speaking, it falls into three parts.

Firstly, he believed in the absolute necessity for applying scientific knowledge to local and central government. He believed that efficiency could only be attained by men trained in knowledge and administration of the law. He ridiculed voluntary workers. In their place he wished to put highly trained and skilled men responsible

to a central authority, men conscious that their work was being supervised by superiors capable of dismissing them if they proved unsatisfactory. He argued that unpaid voluntary workers administering the law in their leisure hours were incapable of producing the desired efficiency in local government, and he could quote numerous instances to prove his point.

Secondly, he saw the necessity for central control of local government and the necessity for suppressing the corruption and inefficiency in parochial government. This was a fierce attack on the believers in *laissez faire*. Charles Kingsley in his novel *Yeast* gives a vivid description of the lack of proper control in the administration of local government. In the country districts the paternal system of government still lingered on and the resident gentry frequently tried to deprive the labouring man of his newly found self-help and independence by boundless and indiscriminate almsgiving. "If half the money," says Kingsley in the preface to the fourth edition of his novel, "which is now given away in different forms to the agricultural poor could be spent in making their dwellings fit for honest men

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to live in, then life, morals and poor rates would be saved to an immense amount.”

This benevolent philanthropy Chadwick termed inefficiency because it was uncontrolled. Indeed it was uncontrollable. No central authority could possibly hope to deal effectively with the demoralized system if the poor, instead of being encouraged to develop their independence, were to be relieved by the gentry of their worst ills without any attempt being made to discover the fundamental cause of their poverty. Chadwick wanted this and similar symptoms of parochial chaos done away with. Again, many parishes were under the control of tradesmen and manufacturers, “who exploited both paupers and public in the interests of their own pockets.”<sup>1</sup> This Chadwick adequately termed corruption.

Finally there was his Sanitary Idea. This was the great principle which inspired all his life's work. Stated simply, it was that man should have scientific knowledge of the conditions through which his health might be affected and act upon that knowledge. Chadwick firmly believed that all disease resulted from dirt and insanitation,

<sup>1</sup> *The Chartist Movement*, Mark Hovell.

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and that these were the causes of death before the appointed time. To a very large extent he was right. The sanitary condition of England at the time of the formation of the first Board of Health was unquestionably responsible for much epidemic and endemic disease. With Lord Shaftesbury he fought hard against the powerful interests which stood in the way of his dream of a clean and sanitary England. His method of cleansing England may be criticized. Indeed there is a good deal to be said for the member of the House of Commons who, on the motion for the dissolution of the Board, stated that England wanted to be clean, but not to be cleaned by Chadwick. He was before his time, with the result that the public felt that it was being bullied. But if he did not actually succeed in cleaning the people he did at any rate prepare the bath. It took time before the nation took the plunge, but Chadwick roused the public conscience and turned on the hot water. To him the credit for this movement must be given, for to him more than to anyone else England owes this great step forward. A standard was set up which was quickly followed in other countries, and



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which is accepted to-day as a matter of course. Few are the people to-day who when they see a motor-van in their town labelled B . . . District Board of Health, realize that this is merely a development of a great idea originating with Edwin Chadwick. People regard such things as necessities of life, but in reality they were conceived in the mind of a great sanitarian, whose teachings were rejected in 1854, but who, with the inauguration of the Ministry of Health in 1918, has now come into his own.

Why, then, was a man who combined all these qualities not called upon to help in directing the affairs of the nation from more important posts? Why was he not Prime Minister or at least of cabinet rank?

"Chadwick," said Sir John Simon in his book on *English Sanitary Institutions*, "erred by impatience; but patience under sufferings of one's own, and patience towards others are not equal measures of magnanimity." Again, in their *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, J. L., and Barbara Hammond write of Chadwick that his "capable qualities were largely spoilt by the hard tone of his mind." These two opinions

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answer the questions as to why he remained merely an efficient public servant and was retired at the age of fifty-four.

Chadwick as a grand inquisitor, as a draughtsman of unanswerable reports, had no equal. He pursued the subject of sewerage, drainage and water supply through a long series of years. He administered the Poor Law Amendment Act with a ferocity that brought a downpour of abuse on his head. He ran the Public Health Board as an autocrat would govern an empire. He did all these things efficiently, fiercely and in an aggressive manner. He was dictatorial and bureaucratic. He made enemies easily and quite unnecessarily. He lacked the art of appearing to give way without actually doing so. He never condescended to argue, he merely stated facts. His own knowledge was tremendous, but he assumed no knowledge in others. He was ungracious in his methods, provoking in his attitude. He went to work in the same way as a tank in modern warfare. He forced his views on others without acknowledging or listening to their side of the question. For him there was no other side. Had he not seen by his own experience the havoc which

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insanitation, disease and dirt were causing among the labouring classes? Why, then, did others remain unmoved by his experiences as detailed, catalogued and published in his reports? To him it was incomprehensible. If they approved of his agitation, let them join The Health of Towns Association and help in the efforts to spread correct information regarding the functions of the proposed Public Health Board, or help remove the groundless agitation that centralization meant the curtailment of the people's local liberties. If they disapproved then let them get out of the way. He, Chadwick, had not the time or the patience to try to win them to his point of view.

That was the man. A driver, a forcer, a pusher ahead, not of himself for his own personal ends—his worst enemies never accused him of this—but of his ideals, of his Sanitary Idea, which he knew to be right and which time indeed has proved was right.

But is it to be wondered at that he was hated? He made no effort at compromise. He hardly troubled to answer his critics. He just drove on until he was driven out.

He made no appeal to the masses as

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Cobbett did with his brilliant gibes at the propertied classes; he did not stir the heart of thousands like Garibaldi in his fight for national independence; or awaken the pride of his countrymen with his imperialistic achievements like Disraeli. He had no great cause with which to enthral the imagination; he had only a hatred of disorder and incompetence, only a fierce desire for the better sanitation of his country. Public Health, Sanitation, Education, Local Government were then, as now, dull subjects. Beyond a wide distribution of his reports, which although containing facts of momentous importance were dull reading, Chadwick made no attempt to organize a popular demonstration to help him. Any such course he would have regarded as vulgar. He was content to force the issue himself, relying on his own ability. But if to this ability, conscientiousness and energy, had been added an attractive manner, who knows to what great heights this man might not have risen?

Yet in spite of this lack of tact he was a lovable man. His friend and biographer, Benjamin Ward Richardson, speaks of him as a man whose "strong will contended with



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a gentle and generous heart, and in the conflict, which he saw could not for ever be maintained, he sought for some other outlets of relief, which might be, at one and the same time, grand in design and great in usefulness." He was obstinate and liked to impose his will on others. He never allowed his heart to rule his head. He never allowed his heart to argue with his head. He did great work for humanity, but he worked even harder for efficiency. As an attractive personality with humane principles working for the good of mankind, he compares unfavourably with many of his contemporaries. But as a great administrator working for the cause of efficiency and order, he stands head and shoulders above them all.

If he had had the gift of leadership added to those gifts we have already described, he would perhaps have travelled farther along the road of greatness than he actually did. But he failed to see that the evolution of reform travels at the pace of the slowest mover. The charges against him are simple. He was regarded as a bureaucrat and as one who wanted to do things too quickly. *Festina lente* was the creed of his

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days. The era of swiftly moving events and swift action was yet to come. Like all great men, in short, he was before his time.

His political position is difficult to define. He was a Benthamite in theory, but he did not hesitate to bring in the State where he thought that by its intervention the freedom of the individual would eventually be enhanced. He was so disgusted with what he saw of private enterprise that he was continually flung back on his idea of a scientific centralized government. It was not so much the system of private enterprise that he fought, but the method on which it was run. He had a strong preference for the paid expert official—an idea which Sidney and Beatrice Webb have since so greatly developed.

Chadwick started his public career when individualism was at its height: but by 1870, when the Education Act was passed, the period of Collectivism had fully set in. This corporation had been already foreshadowed by the Factory Act (1833) and the Municipal Act (1835), and Chadwick's greatest work was done during the period of transition from one to the other. No man did more than he to build the bridge

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of association between the two, but whether he would have wished State intervention to develop still further it is difficult to decide. The collectivist doctrine is that the welfare of the individual depends upon the welfare of the State. In so far as Chadwick's life was devoted to organizing the State so that the individual might be free, happy and contented, he may be called a collectivist. But whether Socialism, which is the inevitable development of this idea, would have been approved of by Chadwick it is impossible to say.

The developments that have resulted from Chadwick's work are manifold, and only a brief summary can be made.

It was Chadwick who first perceived that no individual can be expected to perform his private work and at the same time be held responsible for his town's drainage, water supply and sanitation. These matters must be attended to by a corporate body elected by the population of the town, and the interest of that body should be the welfare of the inhabitants.

It was Chadwick who first faced the problem of efficient local self-government

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organized from a central office. It is to him we owe the degree of efficiency to which we have so far attained in the organization of our various home departments of government.

It was Chadwick who first conceived the idea of the State's duty to the individual by the appointment of assistant commissioners and factory inspectors. It was he who incorporated this idea in the Poor Law Amendment and Factory Acts. He saw that with the advance of industrialism and the scramble for increased production some system of governmental regulation was necessary. He saw that unless some such system was devised exploitation of the weak would be inevitable and would react upon the welfare of the community.

Finally it was Chadwick's greatest performance that he forced on a dense and unwilling nation his Sanitary Idea. It is to him that we owe what seems a commonplace axiom to-day—the idea that people are materially affected by environment. He proved to the world that it is impossible for men and women to live clean and sober lives or to work well and honestly under conditions of squalor and disease. He



proclaimed this principle to the world and was met with abuse. "He looked," he told Richardson, "for every opportunity that should give an historical future to a peculiar and sensitive position." He was right. He gained his "historical future." By common consent Edwin Chadwick is acknowledged to be the greatest pioneer in modern sanitary science—a science which has helped enormously in promoting the welfare of the people.

Edwin Chadwick's life has inevitably to be considered in four distinct phases.

First we saw him a young man struggling for a position as a barrister and supplementing his income by journalism. Unsettled and disturbed, he felt that there was some other work waiting for him; his Sanitary Idea began to take shape in vague notions that the accepted methods of the "practical man" were wrong. Already he felt the awakening of a social conscience. But still uncertain of his aim, he continued training to be a barrister until his journalistic efforts brought him to the notice of the radical reformers. This was the first phase.

Under the influence of Bentham that

unsettled and disturbing feeling became quieter. The Idea, which had been germinating in his mind for so long, took shape. It had arrived—his Sanitary Idea. He was quick to see how much Bentham could teach him and content to wait to launch his attack until the right moment came.

Bentham's death brought him the opportunity to allay his other burning passion, his passion for work. The strenuous routine drudgery of officialdom, how he revelled in it, how he excelled at it! As Secretary to the Poor Law Board his energy was needed and used, but not spent. Still there remained the Idea. This was the second phase.

Disappointment with the work of the Commissioners led to a rupture and the disbanding of the Board. Then he launched his Idea. Writing a momentous report based on actual experiences and unanswerable statistics, he flung at the public a document regarding its sanitary condition. He entered into the fight which followed with renewed energy, and the Government, thankful to keep him quiet, appointed him to a Royal Commission on the Nation's Health. Once again he confronted the

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public with facts which startled the Government into setting up a Board of Health. The battle was half over, so he thought. With Lord Shaftesbury he worked and schemed for the success of the Board, but "the interests" were too much even for his strong will. He failed and retired a broken man. This was the third phase.

There he was still in the prime of life, out of the public eye, retired on a pension. A great public servant dismissed from the public service, because he was too hasty and not tactful enough. In this the fourth phase, was he sad or was he still obstinate? Did he at last see that a people cannot be dragooned, but must be led? He had launched his Idea, and he had failed to get it accepted by the public. Was he still proud or did he curse his limitations? Did he think of these things as he rested at East Sheen? Beaten by his own character, did he see that men are themselves their greatest enemies?

And as the remaining thirty-six years of his life rolled by his obstinacy increased. He himself, a reformer, an agitator, became a reactionary. Medical science advanced, and great steps forward were taken. A new

science, bacteriology, took the field. Did he support it? "Germs! bacteria!" he may have said, "what are they but the inventions of doctors? There is no such thing as a germ." "To avert . . . sickness . . . direct the public exertions in removing those circumstances which shorten life," he might have quoted from his own writings of sixty years back. To him cholera was still nothing but a smell. Yet, to quote his own words again "the great crime of the class of practical men is their dishonest dealings with evidence; shutting their ears to it, and when it is forced upon their perception deprecating it." And yet to him cholera was but a smell, which, rising from filth like steam from boiling water, injuriously affects all with whom it comes in contact. The great worker himself was at last tired. "No compromise!" was the thought uppermost in his mind. There are no such things as germs. . . .

As he lived on at East Sheen he must have reviewed all his great struggles with the obstinate, stupid public. Did he, as he passed away from this world to that special heaven which is prepared for those who work fourteen hours a day, did he realize how



obstinate he himself had been right up to the very end?

To-day his name and his ideals are being kept before the public by the activities of the Chadwick Trust. In his will Chadwick made certain financial arrangements for the propagation of the science to which he had devoted his life. The following is an extract taken from a pamphlet on the Chadwick Trust kindly supplied by Mrs. Aubrey Richardson, O.B.E., Clerk to the Trustees :

“ The Trust funds and the income thereof were to be applied for the promotion of Sanitary Science in the widest possible sense. At the discretion of the Trustees they could be used in establishing professorships in either the medical or the engineering aspect of Sanitary Science; in providing scholarships, maintaining lecturers or scholars, holding examinations, assisting publications or subsidizing institutions, or in providing for the delivery by competent persons of lectures on Sanitary Science ‘or in any such manner as in the opinion of the Trustees will tend to promote Sanitary Science.’ . . . From 1895 to 1913 the greater portion of

the income of the Trust was devoted to the maintenance of the Chadwick Professorship of Hygiene and the Lectureship on Municipal Engineering at University College, London, and a capital sum was given for the provision of the Chadwick Laboratory of Hygiene in that College. Grants were also made to the Sanitary Inspectors' Association. From 1907 to 1912 a scheme was in operation for providing a course of lectures at the University of London, South Kensington, on recent advances in Sanitary Science and Municipal Engineering. . . . Since 1913, while an annual sum has been devoted to subsidizing the Chadwick Professorship and Municipal Engineering at the University of London (University College), a new departure has been made in the way of providing courses of public Chadwick lectures in London and other large towns in Great Britain by competent lecturers on almost every aspect of Sanitary Science."

The vast field over which Sanitary Science has now spread will be realized when it is stated that amongst many others of the lectures mentioned in the last paragraph of

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the extract, some have been given on such divergent subjects as *The Evolution of Epidemics*, *Forests, Woods and Trees in Relation to Hygiene*, *Causes of Infant Mortality* and *The Disposal of the Dead*.

Thus amidst the hubbub and rush of modern London, whose main streets are washed nightly, and whose sanitary arrangements every foreigner praises, Chadwick's Sanitary Idea is still taught. Truths from the master mind on Sanitation are still propagated in the University; men and women listen to professors teaching the new developments; and in Whitehall stands the Ministry of Health, surely the greatest memorial of all.





## PRINCIPAL DATES

- 1800 *Edwin Chadwick born at Longsight, Manchester,  
January 24th.*
- 1801 Lord Shaftesbury born.
- 1804 Benjamin Disraeli born.  
Richard Cobden born.
- 1806 John Stuart Mill born.  
William Pitt died.
- 1807 Abolition of Slave Trade.
- 1809 William Ewart Gladstone born.
- 1812 Charles Dickens born.
- 1815 Battle of Waterloo.
- 1817 Habeas Corpus Act suspended.
- 1818 Karl Marx born.
- 1819 The Peterloo Massacre.  
John Ruskin born.  
The Six Acts.  
Charles Kingsley born.
- 1820 Death of George III. Accession of George IV
- 1823 David Ricardo died.

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- 1824 Repeal of Combination Law.
- 1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway opened.
- 1828 *Chadwick's first article in the Westminster Review.*
- 1829 Catholic Emancipation.  
*Chadwick writes for the London Review.*
- 1830 Death of George IV. Accession of William IV.  
Sir Robert Peel, the elder, died.  
*Chadwick becomes Bentham's secretary.*  
Factory Reform agitation.  
*Chadwick becomes Barrister-at-Law of the Inner Temple.*
- 1831 Cholera epidemic.  
Bristol Riots.  
Michael Sadler's Factory Committee.
- 1832 Jeremy Bentham died.  
Reform Bill passed.  
*Chadwick decides to give up the legal profession.*  
*Chadwick accepts appointment as an Assistant Commissioner on Poor Law Commission.*
- 1833 Emancipation of Slaves.  
*Chadwick appointed to Government Factory Commission.*  
The Ten Hours Agitation.  
Factory Commission reports.  
First effective Factory Act passed.  
*Chadwick elected Commissioner on Poor Law Commission.*

## Principal Dates

- 1834 Poor Law Commission reports.  
*Chadwick gives evidence before a House of Commons Committee on Drunkenness.*  
William Morris born.  
Poor Law Amendment Act.  
*Chadwick appointed Secretary to the Poor Law Board.*  
Dorset labourers transported.  
*Chadwick elected to the Political Economy Club.*
- 1835 Municipal Corporations Act.  
Michael Sadler died.  
William Cobbett died.
- 1836 Anti-Poor Law Campaign.  
James Mill died.
- 1837 Death of William IV. Accession of Victoria.  
*Chadwick's agitation for Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages successful.*
- 1838 Anti-Corn Law League founded.  
*Chadwick promotes a Poor Law Board Inquiry into the causes of fever in the Metropolis.*  
*Chadwick appointed to Commission to establish an efficient Constabulary Force.*
- 1839 *Chadwick married to Rachel Dawson Kennedy of Manchester.*  
Penny Postage.  
Chartist Rising in Wales.  
Poor Law Board Inquiry on Sanitary Condition of Labouring Population.
- 1840 House of Commons Committee on Health of Towns.
- 1841 Anti-Corn Law agitation.

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- 1842 Trade depression.  
Report of the Poor Law Commission on Sanitary Conditions of Labouring Population.  
Royal Commission into Sanitary Condition of Large Towns and Populous Districts (Duke of Buccleuch's Commission).
- 1844 Duke of Buccleuch's Commission reports.  
Health of Towns Association formed.  
The " Rochdale Pioneers."
- 1845 Irish Famine.
- 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws.
- 1847 Ten Hours Bill passed.  
Lord Morpeth's Public Health Bill defeated.
- 1848 *Chadwick receives Order of Commander of the Bath.*  
Lord Morpeth's second Public Health Bill passed.  
*Chadwick appointed Commissioner on Public Health Board.*  
*Chadwick appointed to Consolidated Commission of Sewers.*
- 1849 Cholera epidemic.
- 1850 Sir Robert Peel, the younger, died.
- 1851 Great International Exhibition.
- 1852 Cholera epidemic.  
Duke of Wellington died.
- 1854 Crimean War.  
Break up of Public Health Board.  
*Chadwick retired on a pension.*  
Francis Place died.



## *Principal Dates*

- 1855 Metropolitan Board of Works created.
- 1856 End of Crimean War.
- 1857 Indian Mutiny.  
Charles Kingsley published "Two Years Ago."
- 1858 India transferred to Crown.  
Robert Owen died.
- 1859 Italian War of Independence.
- 1860 Garibaldi's Campaign in Sicily.  
American Civil War.
- 1861 Doctor Southwood Smith died.  
Richard Oastler died.
- 1863 Co-operative Wholesale Society formed.  
Richard Cobden died.
- 1865 American Civil War ends.  
*Chadwick visits Paris Exhibition and meets Napoleon III.*
- 1867 *Chadwick invited to stand as Parliamentary candidate for the University of London.*
- 1870 Competitive Examination adopted for Civil Service.  
Education Act.  
Charles Dickens died.
- 1871 Local Government Board established.  
*Chadwick reports on the drainage of Cawnpore.*
- 1873 John Stuart Mill died.
- 1875 Public Health Act.  
Charles Kingsley died.

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- 1876 Trade Union Act.
- 1878 *Chadwick President of the Sanitary Congress of the Sanitary Institute.*  
Salvation Army formed.  
Lord John Russell died.
- 1879 Henry George published "Progress and Poverty."
- 1880 Gladstone Prime Minister.  
Employer's Liability Act.
- 1881 *Chadwick President of the Public Health Section of the Sanitary Congress.*  
Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, died.  
Thomas Carlyle died.
- 1883 Karl Marx died.
- 1885 Lord Shaftesbury died.
- 1889 London Dock Strike.  
*K.C.B. conferred on Chadwick.*
- 1890 Housing Act.  
*Edwin Chadwick died at East Sheen, Surrey.*  
*July 5th.*

## BOOKS RECOMMENDED

ALTON LOCKE, by Charles Kingsley.

BENTHAM, JEREMY. Collected Works. Edited by John Bowring.

BRITISH HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1782-1901), by G. M. Trevelyan.

CHARTIST MOVEMENT, THE, by Mark Hovell.

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM, by C. E. Raven.

ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY, THE, by James E. Thorold Rogers.

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF ENGLAND, THE, by Sir William Ashley.

ENGLAND SINCE WATERLOO, by J. A. R. Marriott.

ENGLAND UNDER THE HANOVERIANS, by C. Grant Robertson.

ENGLISH ECONOMIC HISTORY, Select Documents, by A. E. Bland, P. A. Brown and R. H. Tawney.

ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Four Volumes), by Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

ENGLISH SANITARY INSTITUTIONS, by Sir John Simon.

ENGLISH UTILITARIANS—JEREMY BENTHAM, by Sir Leslie Stephen.

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GREAT SOCIETY, THE, by Graham Wallas.

HARD TIMES, by Charles Dickens.

HEALTH OF NATIONS, THE. A review of the Works of Edwin Chadwick. (Two Volumes.) By Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson.

HISTORY OF BRITISH SOCIALISM, A (Two Volumes), by M. Beer.

HISTORY OF FACTORY LEGISLATION, A, by B. L. Hutchins and A. Harrison.

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH POOR LAW, A (Two Volumes), by Sir George Nicholls.

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH POOR LAW, A (Volume III), by T. Mackay.

HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM, 1666-1920, THE, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL REVOLUTIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE, by L. C. A. Knowles.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND, THE, by Arnold Toynbee.

LAW AND PUBLIC OPINION IN ENGLAND DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, by A. V. Dicey.

LIFE AND LABOUR IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, by C. R. Fay.

LIFE OF FRANCIS PLACE, THE, by Graham Wallas.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND, by Josef Redlick.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE, by John J. Clarke.

LORD SHAFTESBURY, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond.

PHILANTHROPY AND THE STATE, by Kirkman Gray.



## *Books Recommended*

POLITICAL IDEALS, by C. Delisle Burns.

PUBLIC HEALTH AGITATION (1833-48), THE, by B. L. Hutchins.

MAKING OF MODERN ENGLAND, THE, by Gilbert Slater.

SKILLED LABOURER, THE, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND (1815-1918), A, by J. F. Rees.

SOUTHWOOD SMITH, DOCTOR, by Mrs. Lewes.

STATE IN RELATION TO LABOUR, THE, by W. Stanley Jevons.

TOWN LABOURER, THE, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond

TWO YEARS AGO, by Charles Kingsley.

VILLAGE LABOURER, THE, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond.

YEAST, by Charles Kingsley.



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